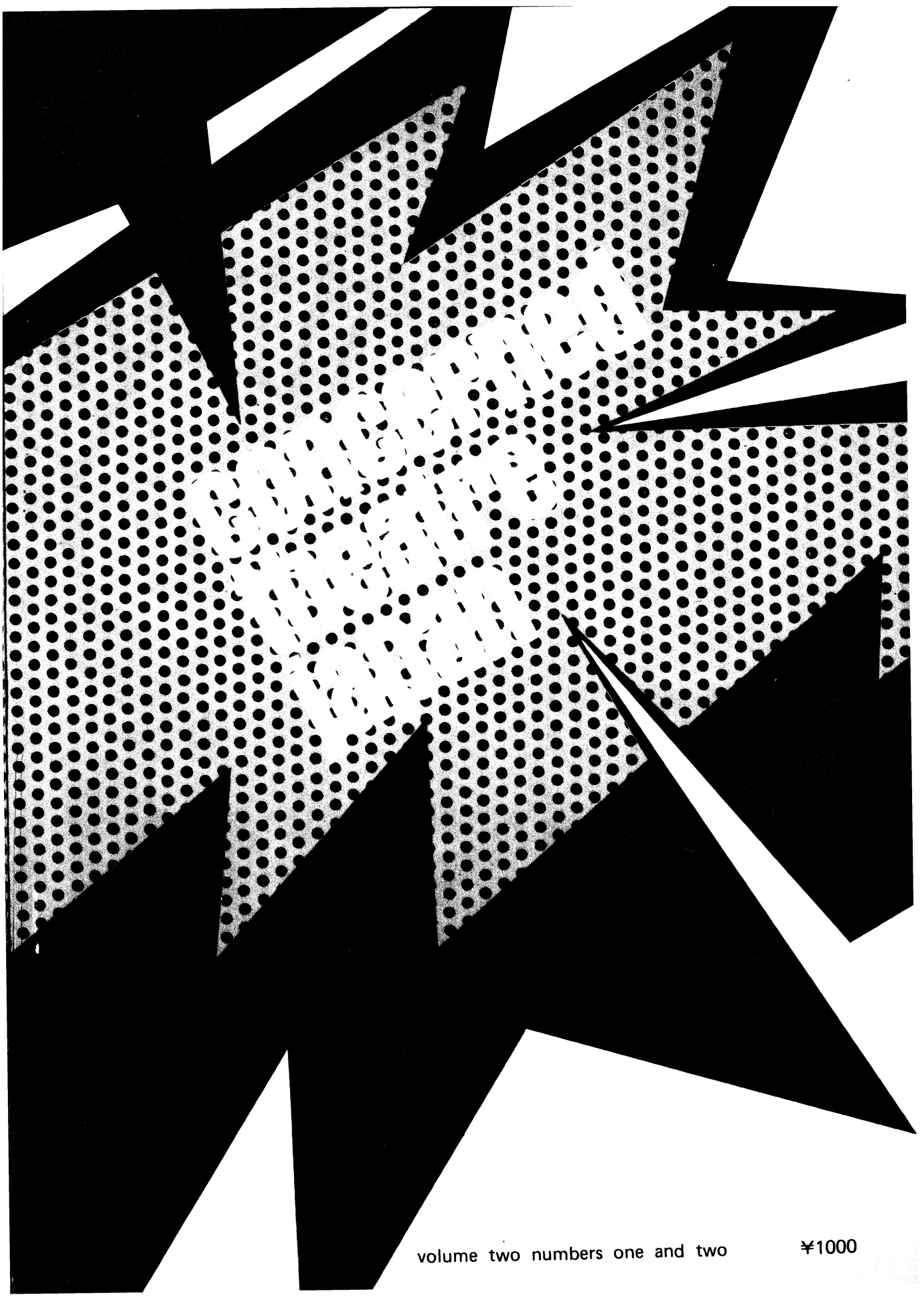

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contents of part one

From The Classics: Izumo 9
The Secret Ritual of The Place of Evil *Hirosue Tamotsu* 14
A Kabuki Stage *Soeda Hiroshi* 22
By Way of Introduction *Saitō Ren* 36
Red Eyes *Saitō Ren* 45
The Eternal Recanter *Saeki Ryūkō* 109

contents of part two

Sakura Illustrated *Akasegawa Genpei* cover
Red Eyes *Shirato Sampei* 19
The Stopcock *Tsuge Yoshiharu* 88

A Note On Names The Japanese names that appear in this magazine are given in the Japanese order: surnames first, then personal names. With names as with other Japanese words all consonants are pronounced as in English with *g* always hard. *A*, *i*, and *e* are pronounced as short vowels and are stressed by doubling; *o* and *u* are always long and are stressed when they appear with macrons. All consonants are stressed by doubling.

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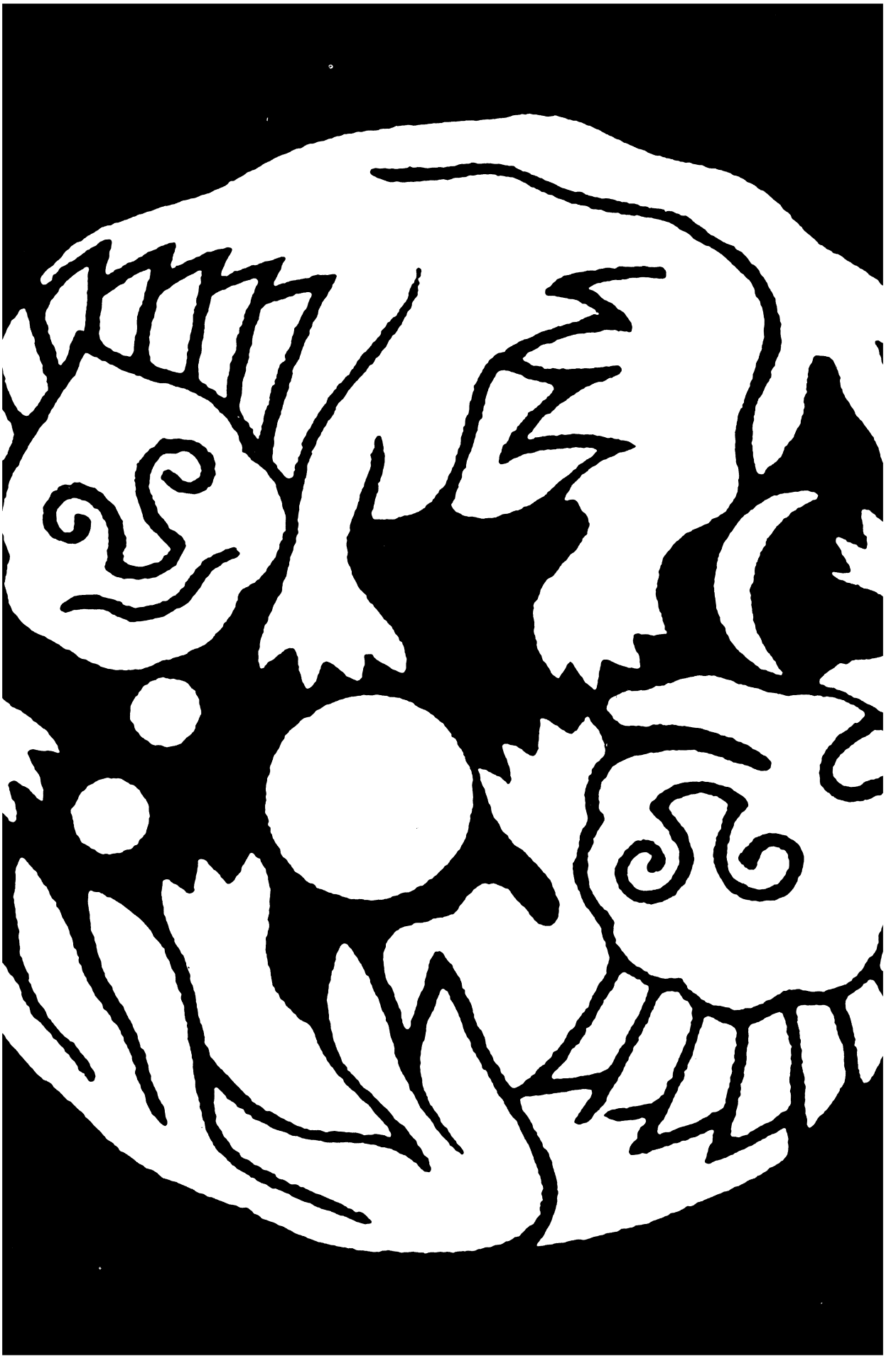
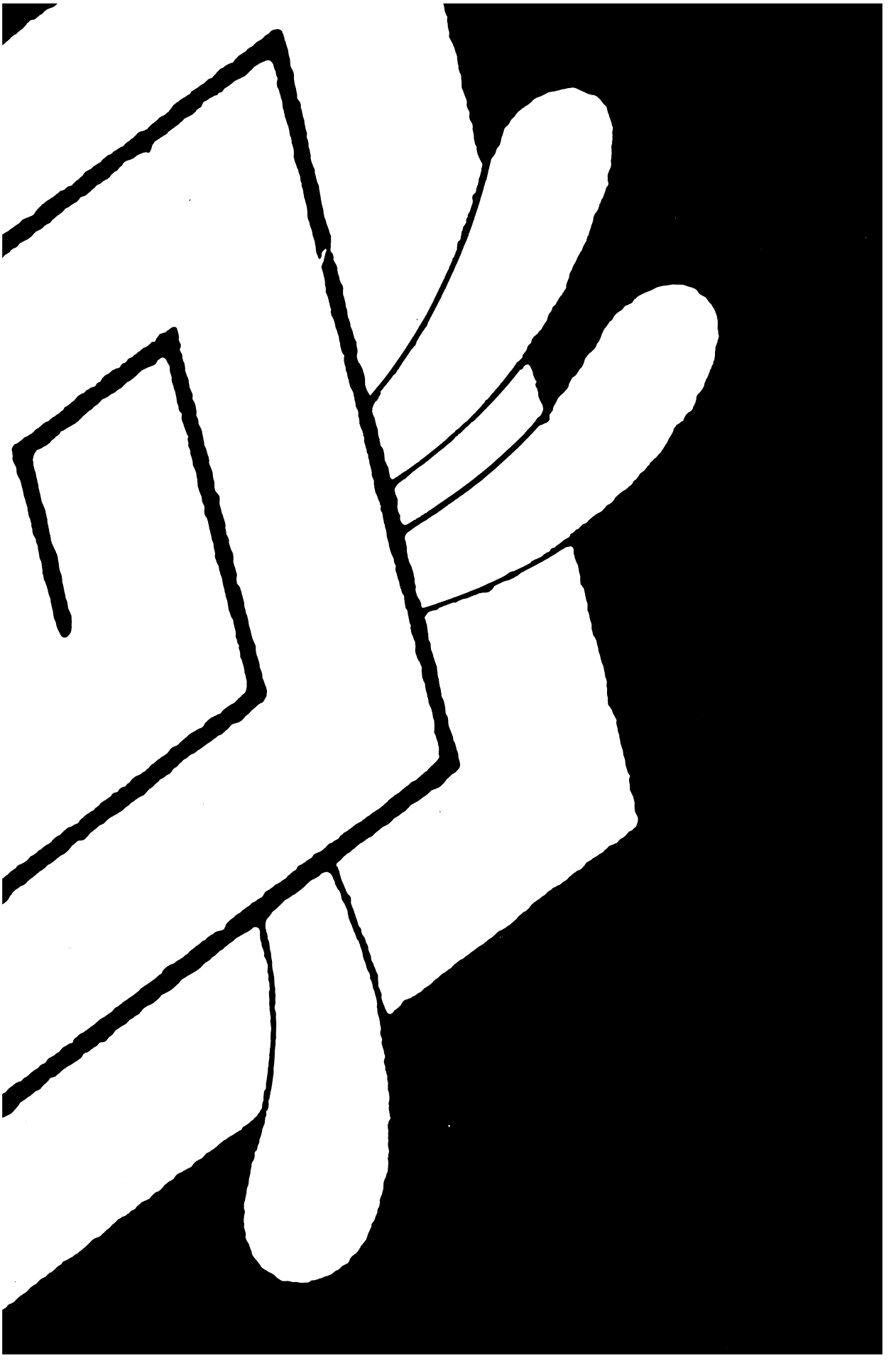
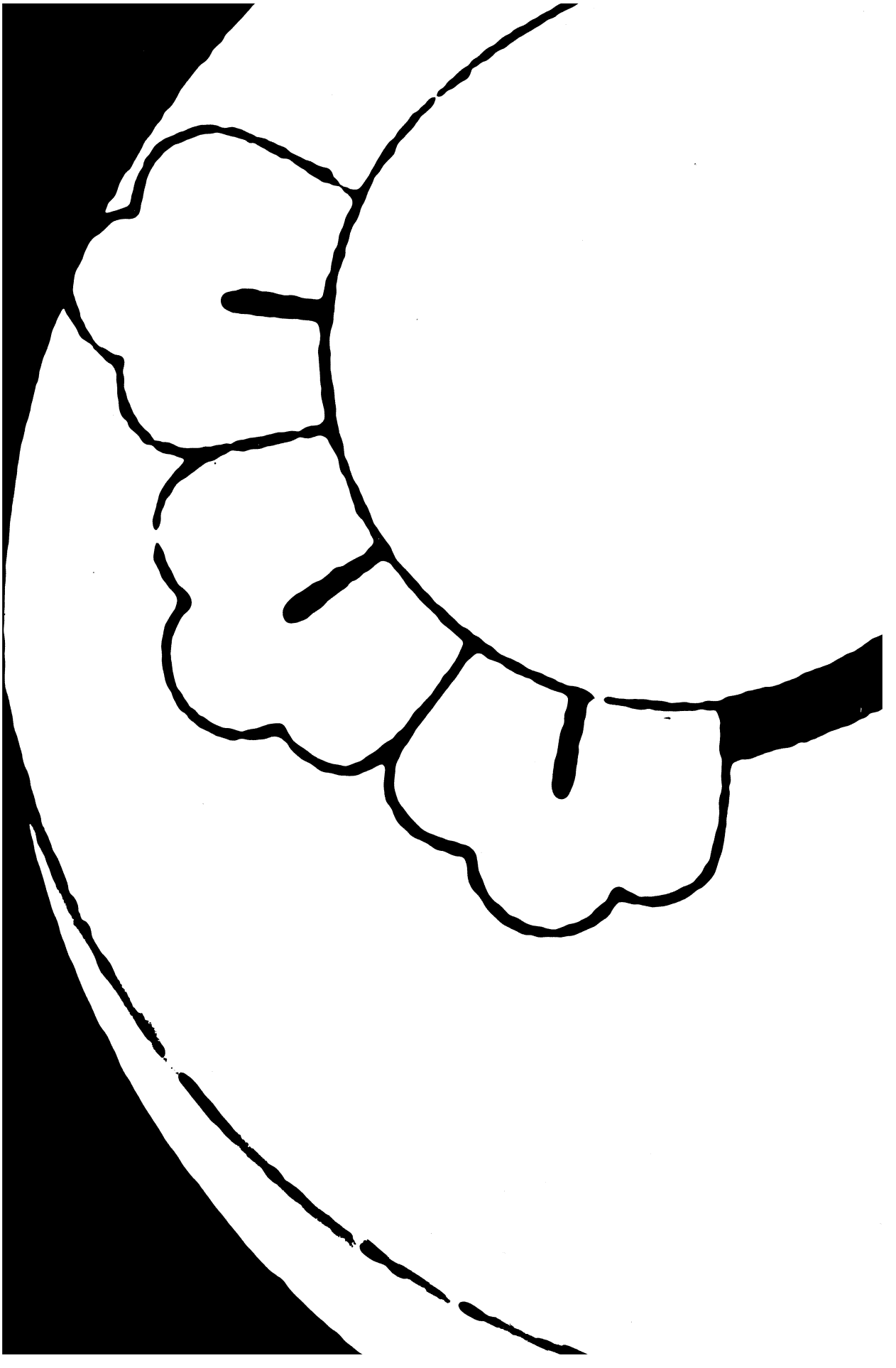
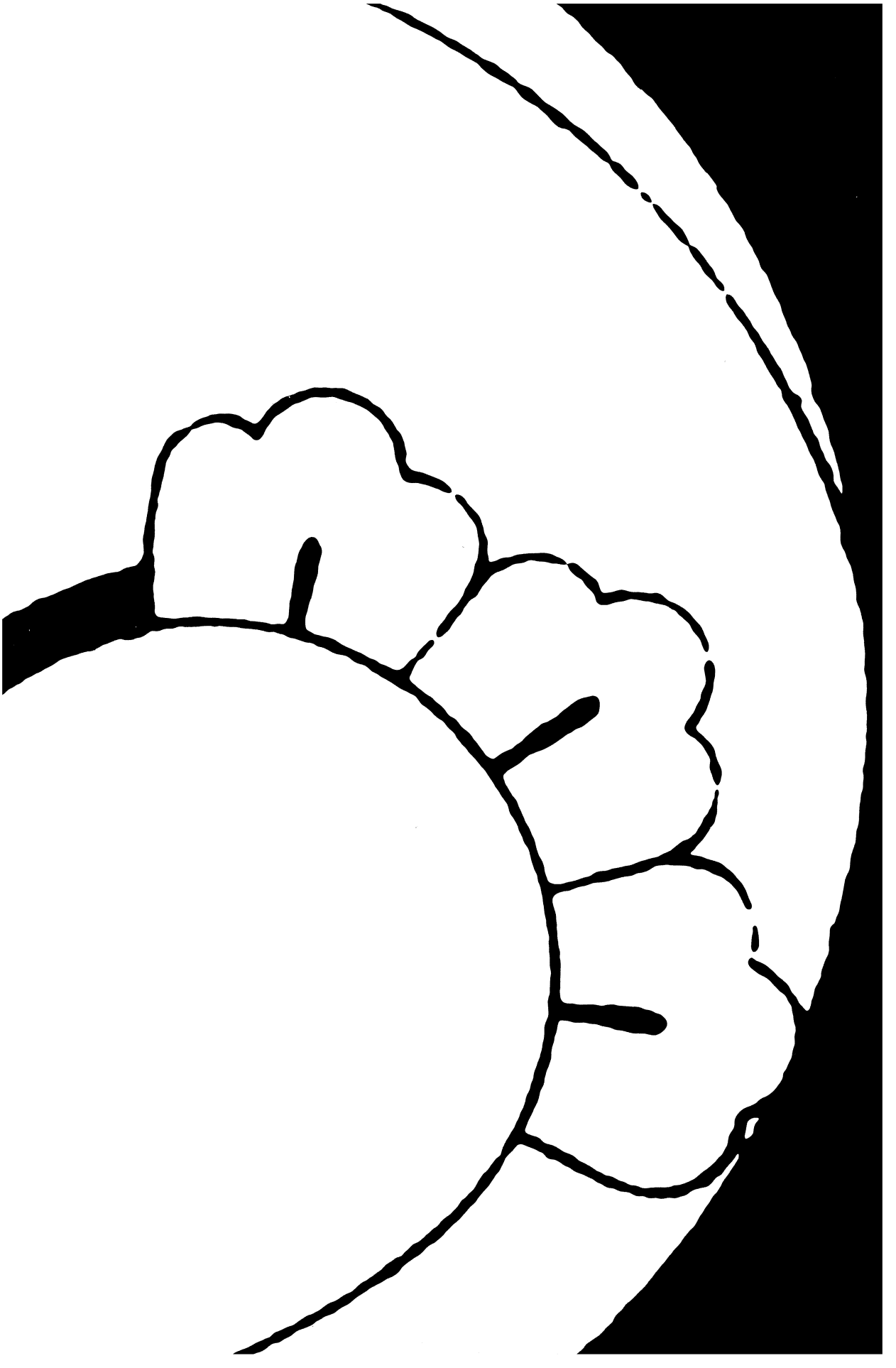
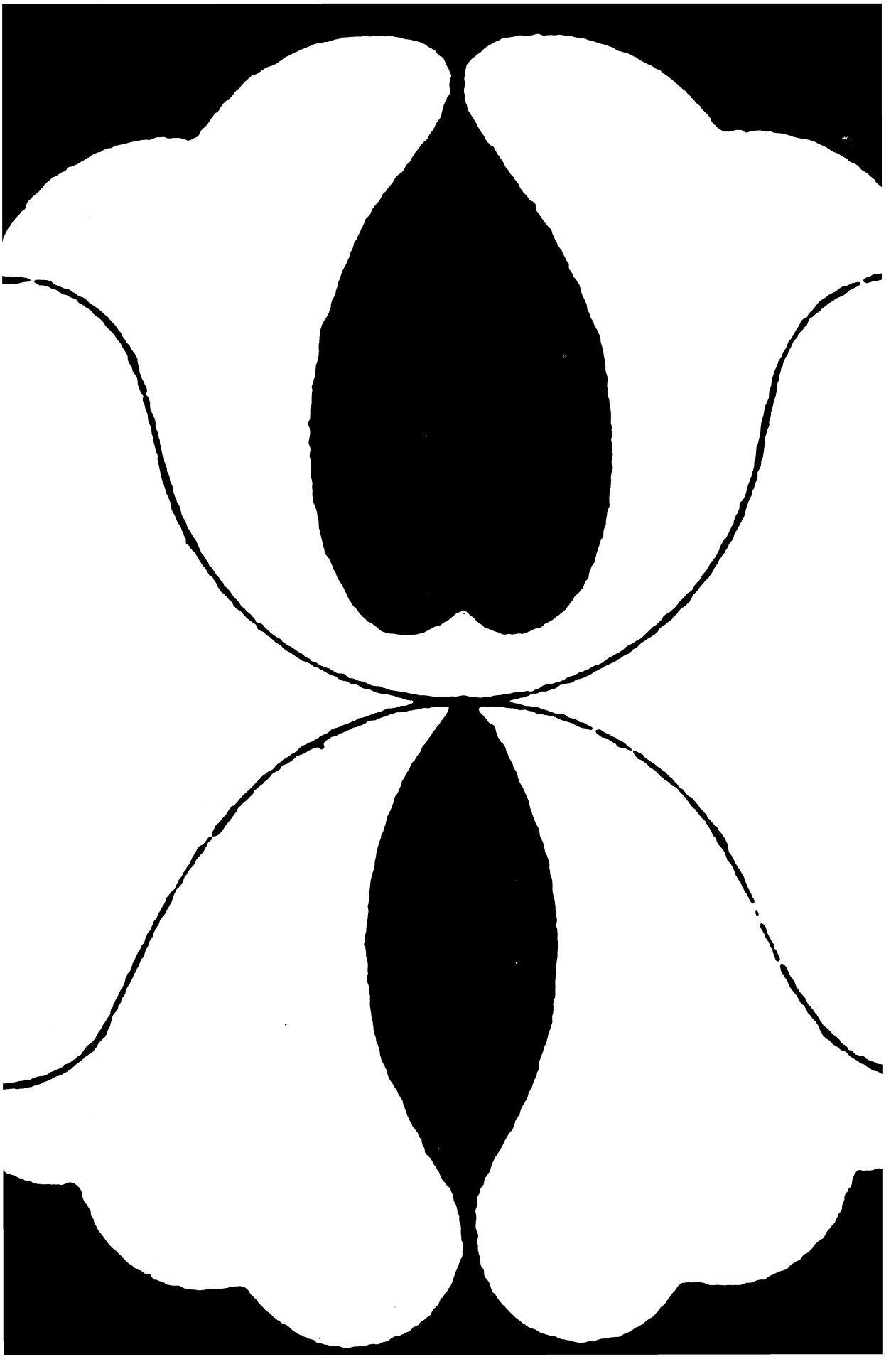










From the Classics

Granny Koike

A long time ago, there lived a family called Koike, who owed their allegiance to the Matsue clan.

One day, one of the family's servants had to run an errand to Hirose. The errand took longer than he expected, and it was already getting dark when he finally started home, so the servant decided to take a shortcut over Mt. Hinoki. Soon the night grew black as pitch. Not a soul passed the servant in the dark, and he began to feel uneasy about being on the mountain alone.

Just as he was approaching the top of the mountain, he saw something flash in the brush. It was the eyes of a wolf. His eyes flashing, the wolf was about to attack the servant! As soon as the servant put his hand on the

hilt of his sword, the glittering eyes of the wolf disappeared, but it was not long before the eyes reappeared. And this time there were more eyes than two. First there were four, then there were six, and then there were eight. The brush was filled with flashing, glittering eyes.

The servant knew he was surrounded, and he knew a lone man with a sword was no match for an entire pack of wolves. That is why he scrambled up a nearby tree. No sooner had he climbed into the tree's branches than the wolves began to gather around its trunk. The servant climbed higher and higher and looked down very timidly. And there, to his dismay, were the wolves trying to ride piggyback on one another's shoulders! One wolf after another, all standing on each other's shoulders. They kept piling themselves up and up and up. The servant was pale and sweating with fright, but he continued to climb up the tree. When he reached the point where the tree ended and the sky began, he realized that he wasn't going to be able to climb any higher. The last wolf took his place on the shoulders of his fellows and reached out for the servant. But the pile of piggyback wolves was not high enough to reach him.

Suddenly, the wolf on top shouted, "Hey, it's no good! Go and get Granny Koike!"

"Granny Koike? Koike is the name of my employer. What is this all about?" wondered the servant.

In a twinkling the wolves were back and again riding piggyback on each other's shoulders. This time, though, the last creature to mount the pile of wolves was not a wolf but a gigantic animal that had not been there before. It blew warm breath on the servant's feet and stretched hairy paws forward. This time the wolves were going to make it! The servant was frightened out of his wits, but he closed his eyes, gave a bloodcurdling cry, and brought his sword down on the head of the monster. "Hyaaa!"

Then there was a great din, "Kalan, kalan, kalan," and the ladder of wolves collapsed, scattering in all directions.

The servant had managed to stay alive through this awful experience, but he was still too frightened to move. The next morning, when the light of dawn had broken, he at last found the courage to climb down the tree. When he reached the ground he found two kettle lids. "Now I see. These lids made that noise last night," he thought to himself. Then he picked up the lids and hurried home.

When he arrived, the house was in an uproar. Something was obviously wrong. He asked one of the maids if something had happened, and she replied, "Last night Granny fell down in the toilet and hurt her head." And when the servant walked into the kitchen, he found the maids complaining that two kettle lids were missing.

Upon hearing these things, the servant began to understand everything. He went straight to the head of the house and told him what he knew. "I think I know what you are getting at," said his master. "I've wondered myself from time to time, too, you know." Then, very quietly, the two men crept toward Granny's bedroom, where she was said to be recuperating from her fall in the toilet the night before. The master and the servant peeked into her room through a crack in the door. And what did they see but a gigantic cat, sitting there, licking its paw and trying to rub a wound on its head. The master did not hesitate but killed the cat with a single blow from his sword.

The servants and members of the family searched every corner of the house and finally found some bones under the veranda floor. The cat had eaten Granny Koike and stolen her identity. The bones under the veranda had been licked clean and white as snow.

A long time ago, there lived a beautiful princess, the daughter of a retainer of the Matsue clan.

One clear, bright day in April, the princess went with her nanny and attendants to the Daisen Shrine to pray. Although it was quite a long way from Matsue to Daisen, the trip was pleasant and uneventful.

Just as they were leaving the

shrine, however, the weather suddenly changed. Black clouds filled the sky and a strong and gusty wind blew so hard that it seemed as if it would shake and move the mountains. The wind blew and blew and turned into a tornado. The princess's servants could not stand upright and lay prostrate on the ground. When they looked up at the sand-filled column of the tornado again, they realized that the princess had been sucked up into it. They saw her being hoisted high up into the sky, then thrust straight down into the middle of Akamatsu Pond.

"Princess! Princess!" they cried in dismay, but the princess never returned to the surface of the water. All that rippled the surface of the pond was the wind, and even the wind subsided, leaving no sign of the princess. The attendants did not know what to do, but they set off on their journey home in tearful silence.

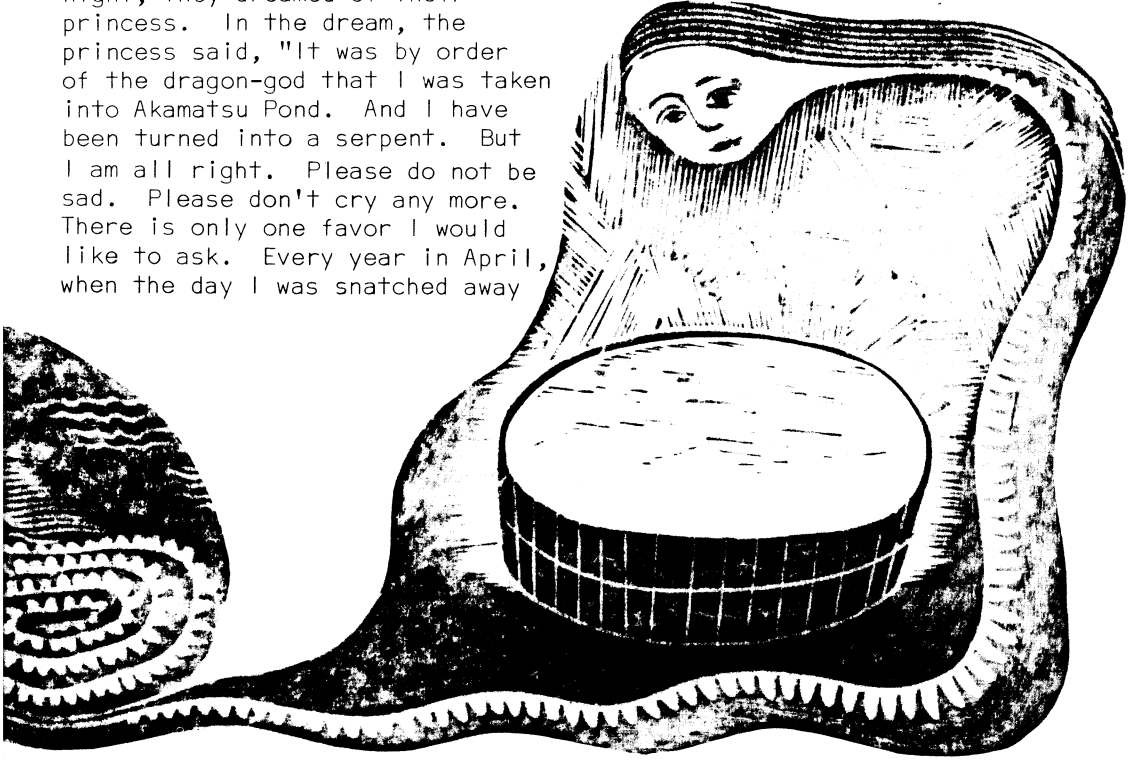
When the princess's parents were informed of the sad news, they were greatly shocked and terribly grieved. They cried everyday, day after day, thinking of their lost daughter. One night, they dreamed of their princess. In the dream, the princess said, "It was by order of the dragon-god that I was taken into Akamatsu Pond. And I have been turned into a serpent. But I am all right. Please do not be sad. Please don't cry any more. There is only one favor I would like to ask. Every year in April, when the day I was snatched away comes around, put a washtub filled with water outside the house, and I will be sure to come to you."

The princess's parents were still very sad, but they felt better after this dream. Every year in April, when the day their daughter disappeared arrived, they always filled a washtub with clean, fresh water early in the morning and left it outside their house. Then both of them prayed in the direction of Akamatsu Pond. "Sweet Princess, come back. It's the day to come home. We're waiting for you."

And every year, when the anniversary of the princess's disappearance drew to a close, they would look into the tub to find the water grown muddy, and there would always be one shining serpent's scale floating in the water.

*

These stories were taken from *Izumo no Minwa* [Folk Tales of Izumo] ed. Ishizuka Takatoshi (Tokyo: Mirai-sha, 1958). The stories were told by Shimizu Heizō and recorded by Mr. Ishizuka.



The Secret Ritual of HIROSUE TAMOTSU

Will Kabuki be able to survive in the modern world? Has Kabuki really survived Japan's rapid industrialization and the transition to modern industrial society? In this article, Professor Hirosue attempts to analyze the dynamics of the Kabuki theatre as a "place of evil" and the complicated structure of the fiction that supported it, and he provides the beginning of an answer to the question of what may have been lost in Kabuki during the process of modernization.

Communication between the audience and the beautiful men and women on the Kabuki stage never ended with a mere exchange of words and gestures. Communication in the Kabuki theatre was inextricably compounded out of that exchange and the conduct of sexual intrigue between the audience and actors. The extraordinary beauty of Kabuki, furthermore, was seldom unrelated to the emotions of sexual intrigue. The acting and stylized beauty of Kabuki cannot be separated from illicit sex, nor can illicit sex be condemned as an inartistic, and thus inessential, aspect of Kabuki, for the art of Kabuki was the art of theatre and sex inseparably linked.

It is not my intention here, however, to demonstrate this point with illustrations from Kabuki's early years, when many performers were prostitutes. In any event, no amount of documentation could incontrovertibly demonstrate

The Place of Evil

my thesis anyway. The intrigue of which I am speaking was entirely immediate to its context. It took place in the imagination, and thus it is with the imagination that it must be perceived. It would be a mistake to construe the illicit sexual intrigue of Kabuki as nothing more than an illusion, however. The Kabuki theatre was hardly exceptional as a place of imaginary flirtations. Beautiful men and women actually lived and moved on the Kabuki stage. The audience--even the strictly guarded daughters of good families--watched them attentively without anyone finding cause for objection. The actors, moreover, bent their art to titillating the audience. They were intent upon intercourse. The audience, too, sought intercourse with art. Sexual intrigue frequently combined with this intercourse between the actors and audience, but it is equally true that the ongoing intercourse with art served as a medium for that intrigue. It was only in the theatre that such sexual intrigue, neither actually illicit nor purely imaginary, could exist.

At this point, one more consideration should be introduced into our discussion--the vertical status relationships that existed between audience and actors. To the audience the actor was an object of aspiration. At times the actor may even have ruled the audience, donning the guise of the gods and acting as their deputy. Simultaneously, however, actors

were Kawara beggars, outcasts scorned and servile. Even as the audience was spiritually dominated, so was it socially dominant. The living, moving, inviolable beauty on stage was also beauty freely violated. Because it was ultimately a beauty utterly subordinate to society, its privileged existence on stage became all the more marvelous and beautiful.

Of all the beautiful men and women on the Kabuki stage, however, it was the women, the *onnagata* female impersonators, that were the most impressive. Nothing is more characteristic of Kabuki than the complicated fiction of the *onnagata*. Without the art of the *onnagata* Kabuki would never have existed. The moment the art of the *onnagata* is disregarded, the order of Kabuki, or at least that of traditional Kabuki, disintegrates. The beauty of Kabuki, therefore, stood in violation of sex taboos. The world of Kabuki was a place of evil where the rules of society did not pertain. In such a world, however, the range of illicit sexual intrigue could hardly be limited to the heterosexual-homosexual duality accepted in society at large. When a beautiful *onnagata*, a being neither imaginary nor real but somewhere in between, stood before the audience, each member of that audience, both men and women, established a relationship with him that was simultaneously hetero- and homosexual. Even this dichotomy, however, is misleading. Men who had no homosexual interests found themselves charmed by the beautiful *onnagata*. I by no means intend to ignore the sheer power of the *onnagata's* art as an actor, but it would be equally ill-advised to attempt an analysis that reduced the *onnagata* to the level of actors in general. Might the *onnagata's* charm, then, have resided in the fact that they played women's roles? If the *onnagata* were merely female surrogates, their beauty could not have eclipsed the beauty of real women, as, in fact, it did. Yet it is often said, and accurately I believe, that by expanding upon a femininity unavailable to women, the *onnagata* achieved a beauty more beautiful and more feminine than that of real women. But if this were all there was to the *onnagata*, it would logically follow that actresses could successfully achieve the same effect by consciously exaggerating their own femininity. This, however, has not been the case. In Kabuki where women play women's roles, Kabuki that developed after the Edo period ban against women appearing on the Kabuki stage had been lifted, actresses have found it necessary to imitate the *onnagata*.[1] Merely exaggerating their own femininity did not produce the desired result. They have had to first take on a male identity and then build their "female impersonation" upon it.

Unfortunately I am not prepared with the deep knowledge of the psychology of sex that would enable me to employ abstract psychoanalytic concepts, but I would like to submit that the *onnagata* cannot be fully understood in terms of sex conversion, either. Let us suppose for the moment, though, that sex conversion was in fact responsible for the *onnagata's* charm. Then it is the process of conversion that is important, and it is what happened during that process that is the *onnagata's* sex. Male members of the audience were not charmed merely by the feminine aspects of the *onnagata*, nor was it merely that they took homosexual interest in the transvestite male. The fact is, I believe, that even men denying any homosexual interest in their daily lives cannot deny the existence of such interests in their subconscious. It might well be thought, therefore,

that interest in the feminine *onnagata* was also a guilt-free way to satisfy subconscious homosexual desires. Our present concern, however, is not the content of the subconscious. What concerns us here is the unified and undifferentiated constellation of emotions, both conscious and subconscious, that comprised the sex of the *onnagata*. But even the word "unified" seems unnecessarily misleading, for we are discussing things antecedent to any sense of unification or differentiation. It is just that, in terms of history, i.e., in terms of the growth of the organism, sex consciousness does undergo a progressive differentiation, which in turn suggests preexistent unity. The most accurate approach might be to conceive of the *onnagata* as reconstructing predifferentiation eroticism by actually being an undifferentiated unity himself. The success of the *onnagata's* embodiment of this undifferentiated eroticism depended entirely upon an enormous web of fiction, for it was certainly not something easily experienced in the sober light of reality.

To say that undifferentiated eroticism was difficult to experience in reality does not imply that it was unrelated to reality. The thirst after such unity and undifferentiation was satisfied in the real world by the charm of the *wakashu*, beautiful homosexual youths. Saikaku,[2] in *Thoughts on Homosexuality* [*Nanshoku Okagami*], describes the charm of the *wakashu* in this way:

> A woman's heart is like blooming wisteria on a twisting vine, but the heart of a beautiful youth [*wakashu*] is like an early blooming thorned plum, unspeakably fragrant.
>
> Nozaki Senjūrō was so beautiful women could hardly believe he was not of some other world. They were jealous of his deportment, his dress, and his firm though gentle disposition. . . . Experts have determined that *wakashu* should be manly and intelligent, ardent in wooing yet difficult to win.

The beauty of the *wakashu* is seen here as the charm of women, especially of beautiful young girls, and the firm disposition of men, unified into a single being. If we consider the omnipresence of the *wakashu* during Saikaku's time, the time when *onnagata* appeared, we have an indication of how the sex of the *onnagata* was supported by the experiences of daily life. Of course Saikaku's image of the *wakashu* was always associated with the idealization of male homosexuality and hence cannot be applied intact to the *onnagata*, who played the roles of women. The masculinity of the *onnagata*, moreover, constantly imperiled their femininity, and it was upon this perilous contradiction that the *onnagata's* sex and the beauty of that sex depended.

The sex of the *onnagata* was not real sex. Although at first it might have derived from the real sex identity of men who acted like women, it developed as something entirely different in Kabuki, for the establishment of Kabuki also meant the establishment of the *onnagata's* art. To ignore the conscious fiction of Kabuki would be to make the error of identifying the *onnagata* as nothing more than men who acted like women. An inept *onnagata*, no matter how feminine, could never evoke the salaciousness of the audience and hence could not consummate the characteristic intrigue of the Kabuki theatre.

> The *onnagata* should continue to have the feelings of an *onnagata* even when in the dressing room. When taking refresh-

ment, too, he should turn away so that people cannot see him. To be alongside a *tachiyaku*[3] playing the lover's part, and chew away at one's food without charm and then go straight out on the stage and play a love scene with the same man, will lead to failure on both sides, for the *tachiyaku's* heart will not in reality be ready to fall in love.[4]

If an *onnagata* has a wife he should conceal the fact. Should someone mention his wife he should feel like blushing, otherwise he should not be performing *onnagata* roles and will not make his way in the profession. The good *onnagata* will maintain a child's heart regardless of the size of his family.[5]

Yoshizawa Ayame's prescriptions are predicated upon an existence that has gone far beyond the limits of the natural sex consciousness of the effeminate man. It is the consciousness of the actor who attempts to transform his natural sex into the fictitious sex of the *onnagata*; it is the consciousness of the "good *onnagata*" who attempts to "make his way in the profession." The *onnagata* was neither a woman who could not take a wife nor a homosexual who would not. The *onnagata* was of a fictitious sex unaffected by marriage.

It seems unlikely, however, that this fictitious sex should suddenly have developed out of natural or everyday sex. Even given the vacuum created by the banishment of women from the Kabuki stage, some other influence was necessary before the *onnagata* could be conceived to fill that vacuum. *Wakashu* or effeminate men, who had developed naturally, could probably have intervened, but they would not necessarily have become the medium for the fictitious consciousness required by the theatre. Through acting in the theatre they might have developed a tradition of fictitious consciousness all their own, but that is a moot point. The problem at hand is the establishment in Kabuki of the unique *onnagata* fiction.

We must be wary of making hasty judgments and associations in solving this problem, but one association that can be made with some safety is with the pleasure quarters and the highly accomplished courtesans who inhabited them, especially the beautiful *keisei*.[6] Let us quote again from Yoshizawa Ayame.

A certain *onnagata* asked the Great Yoshizawa how best to prepare oneself for the profession. His reply was that if an *onnagata* made a success of a *keisei* role, all others were easy to perform. The reason for this is that, since he is basically a man, he possesses, by his nature, a faculty of strong action, and he must carefully bear in mind the softness of the *keisei* and her feminine charm. Thus, the greatest attention should be paid to the training for *keisei* roles.[7]

"Since he is basically a man, he possesses, by his nature, a faculty of strong action." This is a necessary but insufficient precondition: "He must [also] bear in mind the softness of the *keisei* and her feminine charm." It must be noted that "softness" and "feminine charm," while attributes of female beauty in general, are attributes Ayame says must be practiced and mastered by performing *keisei* roles in particular and not by imitating women in general. It was not just any woman in her relatively natural state that provided the model, but the *keisei*, who, while being a woman, also represented an exist-

ence based upon a structurally unique fiction.

The webs of love spun (love-games played) by sophisticated guests and courtesans in the pleasure quarters were predicated upon a highly developed fiction. It was a world dominated by money, where guests bought and prostitutes sold. Nevertheless everything depended upon there being a world of love where such vulgarities as money had no place. Love was a game played in the sentience of its insubstantiality, without the cynicism that sentience brings. This utopian sphere was dependent upon the ability to live a delicate fiction. And as this fiction of the pleasure quarters differed from the perfectly self-contained fiction of the theatre, the pleasure quarters required with a special ruthlessness adherence to their codes of decorum.

The courtesan developed supported by the counter-regimen of a place of evil and as its symbol. It required not only that she don a masklike femininity over her natural womanhood, but also that her guests (not audience) perfect themselves to play their roles, as well. The courtesan, however, could never be free of her woman's body and woman's desires, and so the fiction of her existence necessarily differed from that of the *onnagata*. The courtesan had to walk a dangerously narrow path: if she were too aloof she would fail to achieve her purpose, and if she were too eager she would soon be unable to continue her career. But even more dangerous was a guest who carelessly partook of the fiction of the pleasure quarters without observing their laws. In such instances the guest lacked the charity for the conditional fiction of the pleasure quarters that he might have shown for the pure fiction of the theatre. As Saikaku put it,

> It would be better, then, if he stopped frequenting the pleasure quarters. It would be sufficient to his purposes to dress his wife in padded silk, remove the keys to doors and dressers from her waist, caution her against mentioning food or charcoal, and inspire in her a naïveté that wonders what in the world money is. It would suffice to instruct her in the arts of extending her little finger when smoking, using liquor with extravagance, feigning sleepiness, composing long letters to wheedle presents, crying heartrending tears, and concocting lies. He would be no worse for staying at home.

Here, deprived of her fiction, the *keisei's* "softness" and "feminine charm" are reduced to "a naïveté that wonders what in the world money is." The *keisei's* "softness" and "feminine charm" existed on a precipice threatening imminent collapse, for her fiction, while constructed on the foundation of *real* womanhood, had to be firmly resistant to the devastating potential of that reality. Saikaku, in *The Life of an Amorous Man* [*Kōshoku Ichidai Otoko*], depicted the famous courtesan Yūgiri in this way:

> Her unpainted face and bare feet are exquisite, and her dress is refined and subdued; her body is just plump enough, her eye is keen, her carriage is splendid, and her skin is white as snow; she is excellent in bed and has a reputation for being lusty and amorous, showing men true ecstasy; she is able to hold her liquor, has a superb singing voice, is a master of the samisen and koto, and is graceful with assembled guests; she composes letters of nobility and length; she is neither greedy nor stingy; and

> she is sincere in all her dealings, while a master of coquetry. If asked who this woman could be, five people out of five would respond, "Yūgiri, who else!"

If there were ever a woman born to be a courtesan, she would have been like Yūgiri perhaps, but even Yūgiri was a creation of the pleasure quarters.

Men were obliged to use the *keisei* as their model for female impersonations; hence the *onnagata* evolved as a double fiction. The unique sex of the *onnagata* thus appeared with the transcendence of natural sex. This does not imply transcendence of sex itself but the fusion of sex distinctions and the achievement of an undifferentiated sex through physical art.

Both the pleasure quarters and the theatre were places of evil. Perhaps this generated a certain intimacy between the courtesans and *onnagata*. But characteristic of such places of evil, also, were the vertical status relationships existing between courtesan and guest, audience and actor. Perhaps the inimitable sex of the courtesan and *onnagata* was only possible because of this status system. A courtesan to her guest was an object of aspiration. But she was a woman available at a price, a woman who could be violated. Like an actor, she was doomed to scorn and continual violation. But that was the beauty of the violated. We shall not understand that beauty, however, until we have achieved an appreciation of the eroticism that was solely the possession of those in whom nobility and debasement, beauty and wretchedness were indivisibly mixed. And to achieve this appreciation we may well have to return in time to an age when actor and courtesan were still one and the same and bound to an animistic religious cosmology.

For much of Japanese history, bands of itinerant actor-prostitutes spiritually trespassed the country. As itinerant agents of the gods they would dominate the populace. Simultaneously, however, they were forced to relieve the people's suffering, taking their sins and imperfections upon themselves. They were thus as much the scapegoats of men as they were the deputies of the gods. Capable of impersonating the gods, they had also to shoulder the suffering of man. As actors on stage, they concentrated and purged sins and imperfections, even acting out man's detested death. I am surely not alone in perceiving a residue of unearthly shadows in the *onnagata*, shadows of afflictions born for an animistic people. It is difficult to believe that the *onnagata* did not transcend natural sex with the aid of this animistic unearthliness, and it seems inconceivable that the *onnagata's* unique eroticism did not evolve as a new dialectical synthesis of this animistic unearthliness in art.

Onnagata originated with the banning of women from the Kabuki stage, a development not unrelated to sexual repression. The *onnagata* defied this repression by violating the ethic of sexual segregation. In some respects the *onnagata's* defiance of repression resembles the way animistic itinerant players, while themselves the objects of repression, traveled, violating the repressive order of resident communities. With absurd and sometimes grotesque imagery they reigned over, then violated and purged the souls of the people. In a different form, this same struggle process continued in the place of evil that was the Kabuki theatre. And it was by virtue of the same terrible animistic power that underlay their origins that the *onnagata* were able to transcend natural sex and manifest the beauty of an entirely unique sex as art.

The same was true of the audience. Even as resident populations

resisted the violation of their communal order, they had no choice but to accept cathartic violation by the animistic traveling entertainers. It was here that to scorn and to be violated united into a single spiritual experience. In the theatre, the audience, too, was violated by the beauty of the *onnagata* peculiar to the place of evil. The greater the beauty, the stronger the desire to be violated--this, as we have seen, was a spiritual syndrome that had long since been established. At the same time that they encountered the strange sexual beauty of the *onnagata* as the object of violation, the audience wanted above all else to be violated by that beauty. Vertical status relationships subtly complicated the situation, however, necessitating illicit sexual intrigue. And it was by being violated, by being involved in these intrigues, that the *onnagata* violated the audience. That was the secret ritual of the place of evil.

Notes

[1] Women, who with izumo-no-Okuni had been responsible for originating Kabuki during the last years of the sixteenth and early years of the seventeenth centuries, were banned from the stage by government order in 1629. The government edict seems to have been aimed primarily at *Onna Kabuki*, where women played all the parts, because they claimed it had an unhealthy and immoral influence on the populace. --trans.

[2] Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) is considered to have been one of Japan's greatest novelists. His novels deal primarily with the merchant class that emerged with the growth of city culture and a money economy during the seventeenth century, and particularly with the life of the pleasure quarters. --trans.

[3] *Tachiyaku* means a male role in Kabuki. By the seventeenth century *tachiyaku* had come to refer only to roles for young or good male characters. --trans.

[4] Yoshizawa Ayame, "The Words of Ayame" in *The Actors' Analects*, ed. & trans. Charles J. Dunn and Bunzō Torigoe (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1969), p. 61. Yoshizawa Ayame (1673-1729) is considered to have been one of the greatest *onnagata*. His "Words of Ayame" [*Ayamegusa*] consists of advice to *onnagata* actors. --trans.

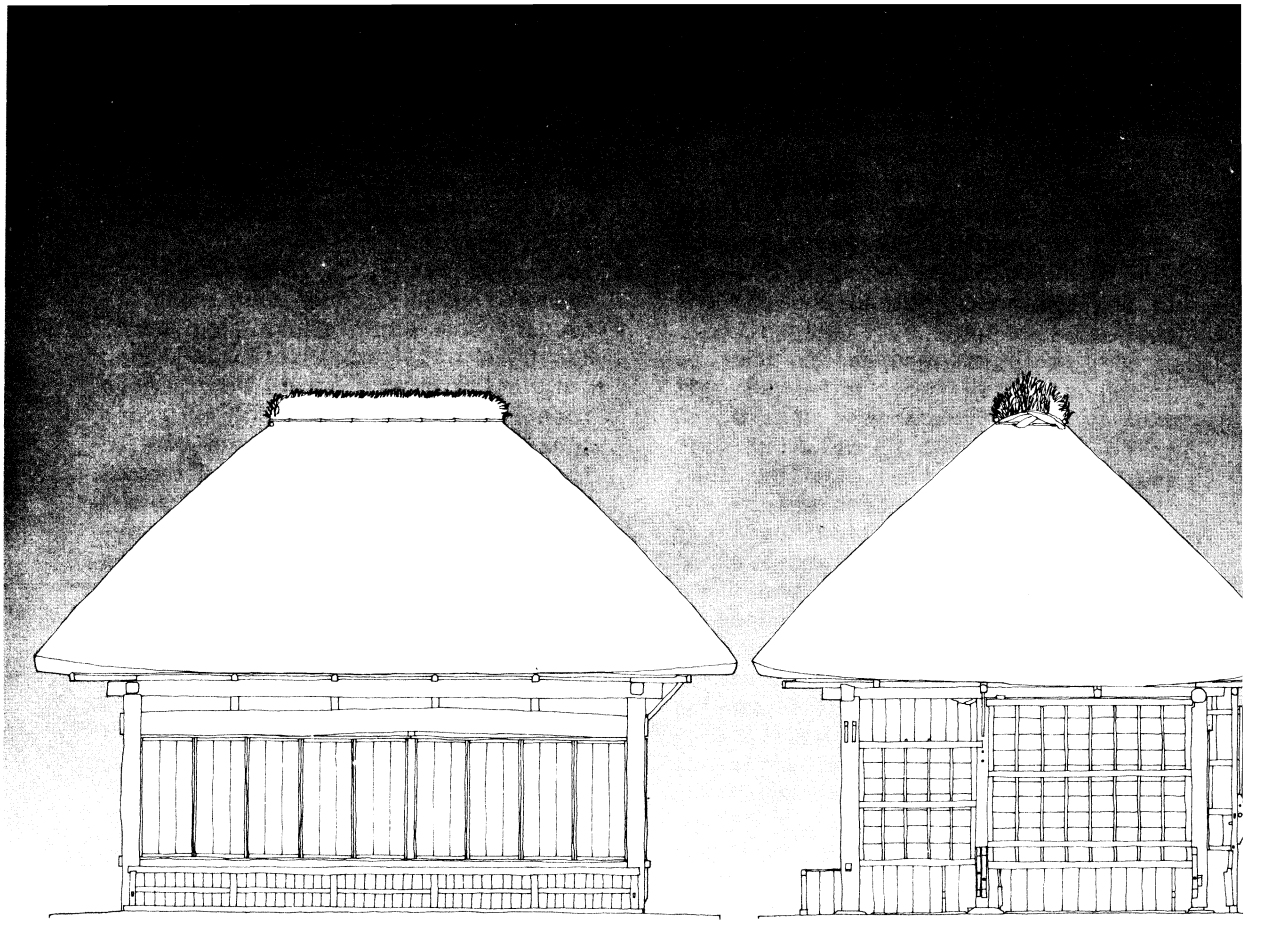
[5] This translation is the translator's own. This passage also appears in Dunn and Torigoe on page 62 in a different and apparently inaccurate translation. --trans.

[6] *Keisei* literally means a woman capable of toppling castles with her beauty. In society at large the *keisei* were accomplished courtesans of no specific rank, but as only the most illustrious *keisei* were taken as material for Kabuki plays, the *keisei* role in Kabuki eventually came to be identified with the ultimates of feminine beauty and accomplishment. --trans.

[7] Yoshizawa in Dunn and Torigoe, pp. 49-50.

*

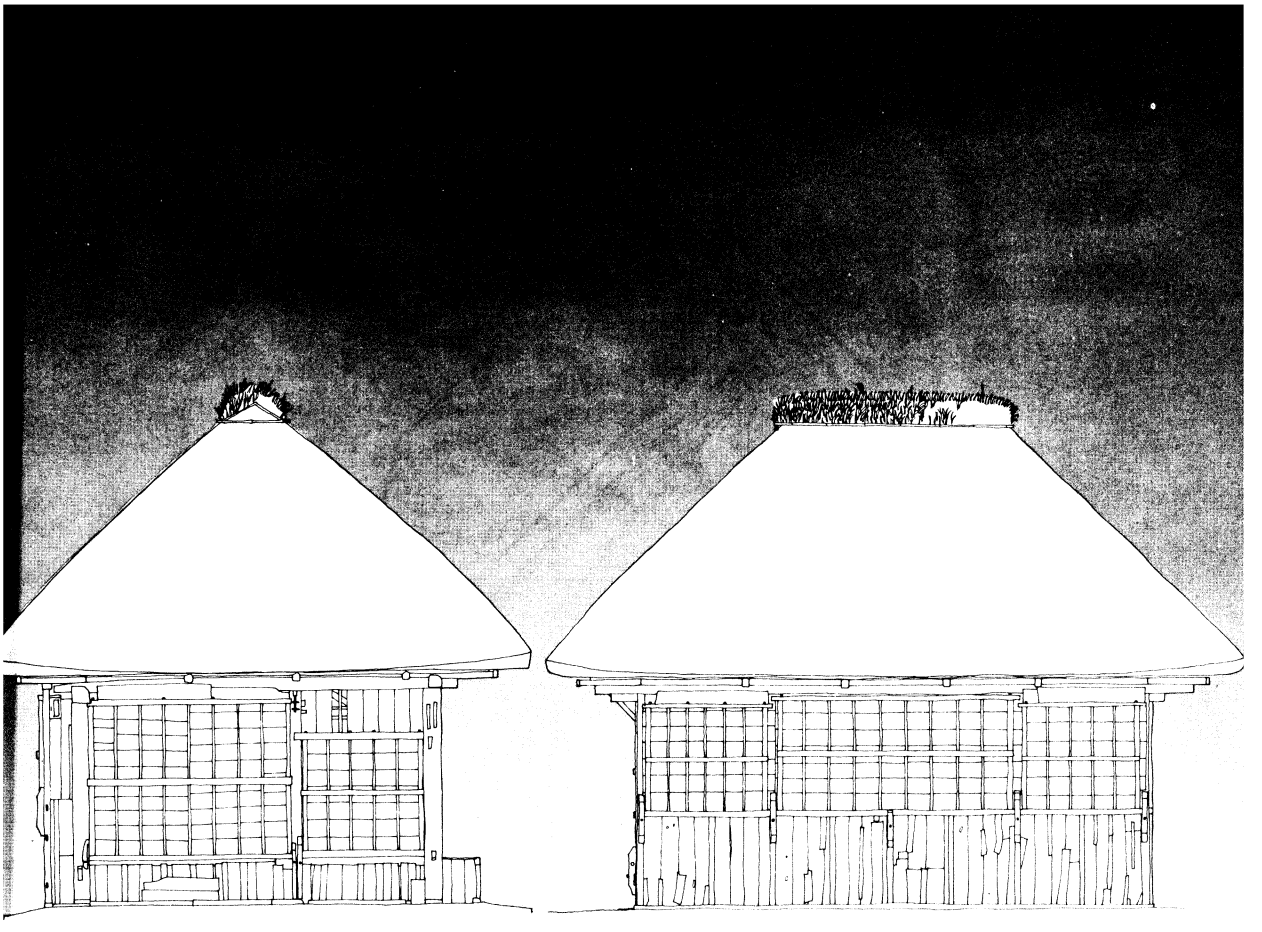
Hirosue Tamotsu is professor of Japanese literature and chairman of the literature faculty at Hōsei University in Tokyo. This article, originally titled *Akubasho no Higi: Kyokō no Sei*, is taken from Hirosue's *Akubasho no Hassō* [The Concept of The Place of Evil] (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1970). Readers will be acquainted with Professor Hirosue from his previous articles in **Concerned Theatre Japan**: "The Blind Kagekiyo" (**CTJ** 1-1) and "Ekin" (**CTJ** 1-2).



A KABUKI STAGE

Kami-Miharada: According to records from 1803, a village of 89 homes and 328 inhabitants. In the fields of this small farming village, at the foot of Mount Akagi in Gunma prefecture, stands a miscanthus-thatched, hip-roofed building nine meters across and 7.2 meters deep. Narrow fields slope toward the front of the building on the west. To the north are higher fields reinforced by an embankment. To the south is a cliff, and below it a road pressed against its wall by broad paddy fields. Like the homes of the farmers of the area, irises have been planted on its thatched roof. From 1819, when it was first designed by a carpenter known only as Chōjirō, until the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the farmers of the village faithfully performed their own Kabuki in this theatre twice each year.

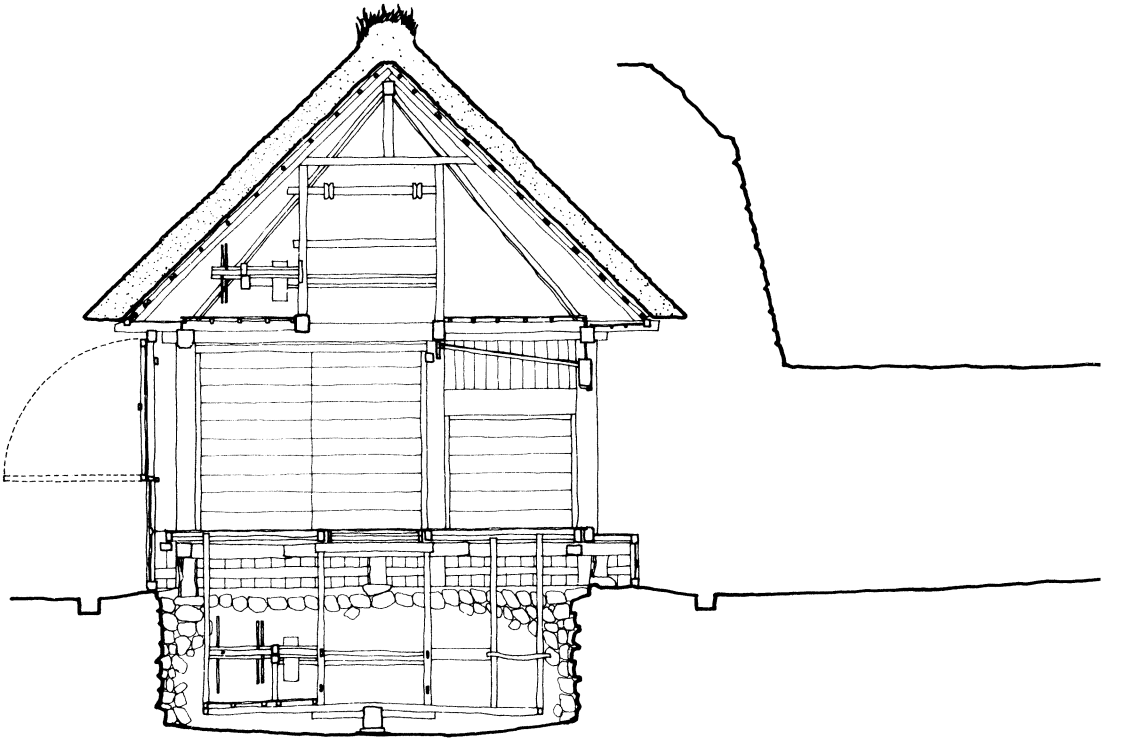
In the village of Kami-Miharada stands a temple called Tenryūji. This theatre was originally constructed on the temple grounds, but in 1882 it was relocated on its present site amidst the farmers' fields. Before relocation, the main building of Tenryūji had been used for rehearsals, and the farmers of the village were always to be seen moving in and out of the building. Even today one of the rooms in the temple's main building is still called the *wakashu* room,[1] attesting to



SOEDA HIROSHI

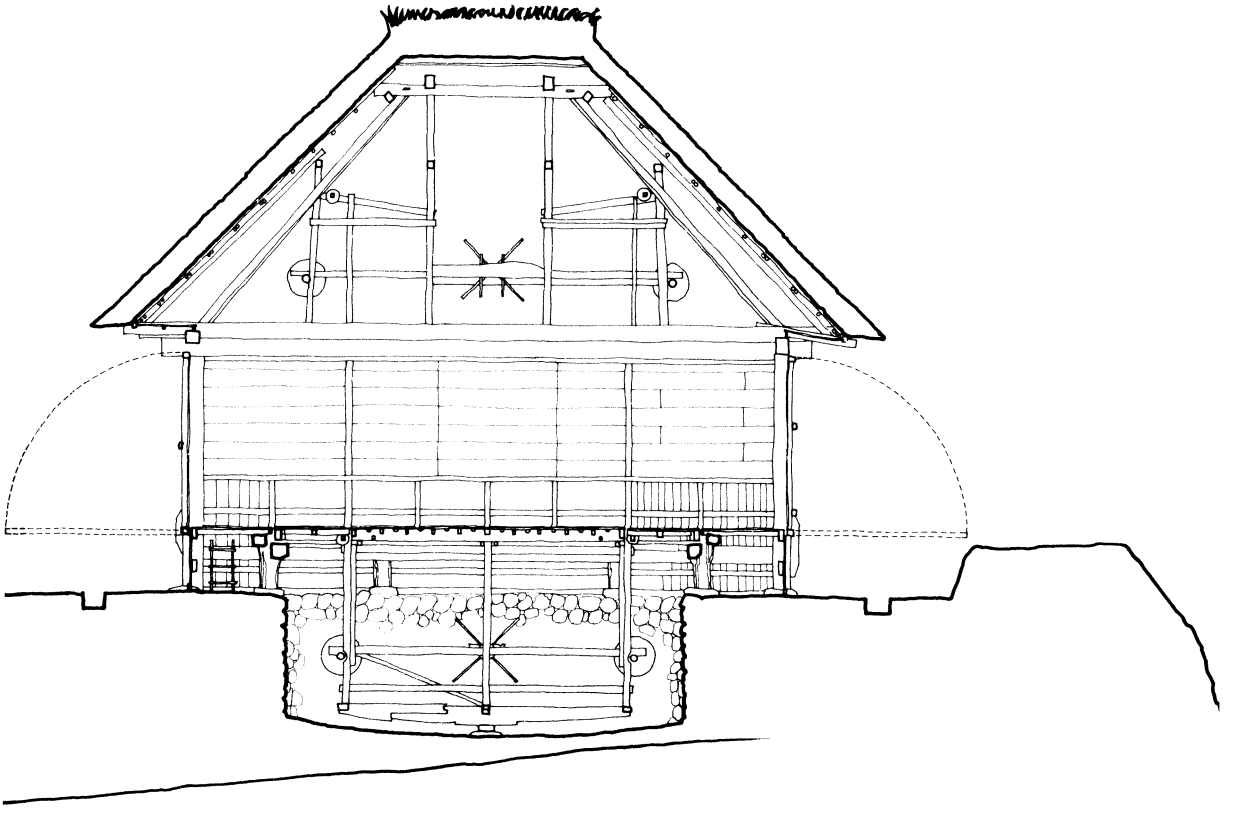
the important role Kabuki played in the lives of the people and their place of worship. Repression of the theatre by the feudal aristocracy was harsh at the time, but, as Kami-Miharada was well removed from the provincial capital, it was possible to escape the watchful eye of the lord of the realm and produce plays in the farmers' spare time. In 1852, however, an informer reported the farmers' activities, and the director Tomaru Shūzō and four of his young assistants were sent to Edo, the four youths to spend a year apiece in prison and Shūzō to die there. After the Meiji Restoration, the farmers continued to rehearse in secret and to produce spectacular plays in their theatre even though orders forbidding them to do so had been issued. Any number of times the police tried to stop a performance, only to be mobbed by the outraged spectators.

The building is small and square and erupts out of the otherwise open fields. It contains nothing but a stage and stage machinery. Each time a performance is held, an enclosure is built around the stage and dressing rooms, and a *hanamichi* (a runway through the audience to the stage), musicians' boxes, and raised galleries and dirt-floored boxes for the audience, all covered by an enormous roof, are construct-



ted. Of these, the musicians' boxes and *hanamichi* are prefabricated, being stored away when not in use. The other accouterments are constructed of freshly cut timber, bamboo, rice-straw matting, rice bags, rice-straw rope, bamboo trays for silkworms, and other materials. After each production these materials are either returned to the farmers who provided them or are auctioned off, leaving only the gently sloping fields that had served as seating for the audience. Thus, when a passerby glances into the fields, where only the stage itself remains standing, he has no way of knowing that an enormous theatrical arena had once occupied the site.

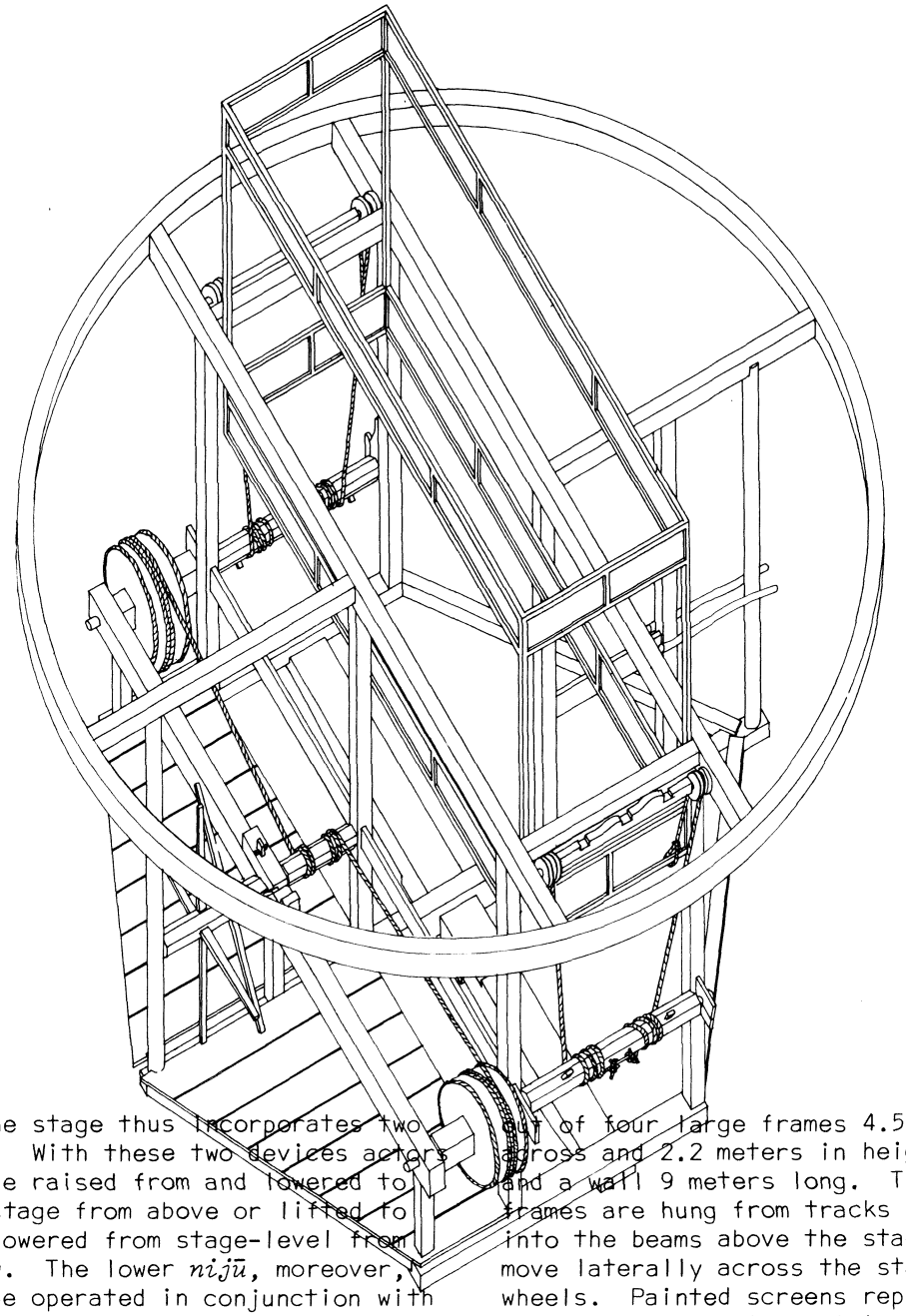
The façade of the building differs little from a normal farmhouse shut off from the world by ten wood panels (*amado*) used to keep out the wind and rain. When the stage is in use these panels are removed. The side and back panels, however, two on each side and three to the rear, are equipped with wooden hinges at the bottom. When the stage is in use, these panels are dropped outward to be used as flooring. In this way the floor area of the stage is doubled. The battens, artlessly affixed to the building by clamps, are the only evidence differentiating it from any ordinary dwelling. The panels to the right and left are swung from the stage, which is



0 1 2 3 4 5 meters

raised 90 centimeters above the ground. The back panels, however, are swung from their hinges an additional 90 centimeters above the level of the stage and thus create a raised platform running across its rear. When a performance is to be given, a temporary enclosure is built and a paper curtain painted with a distant scene (*tōmi*) is affixed to it. The term *tōmi* does not dictate that the scene depicted be man-made, and there are places that use such backdrops painted with scenes from nature, but natural scenes are not used in Kami-Miharada.

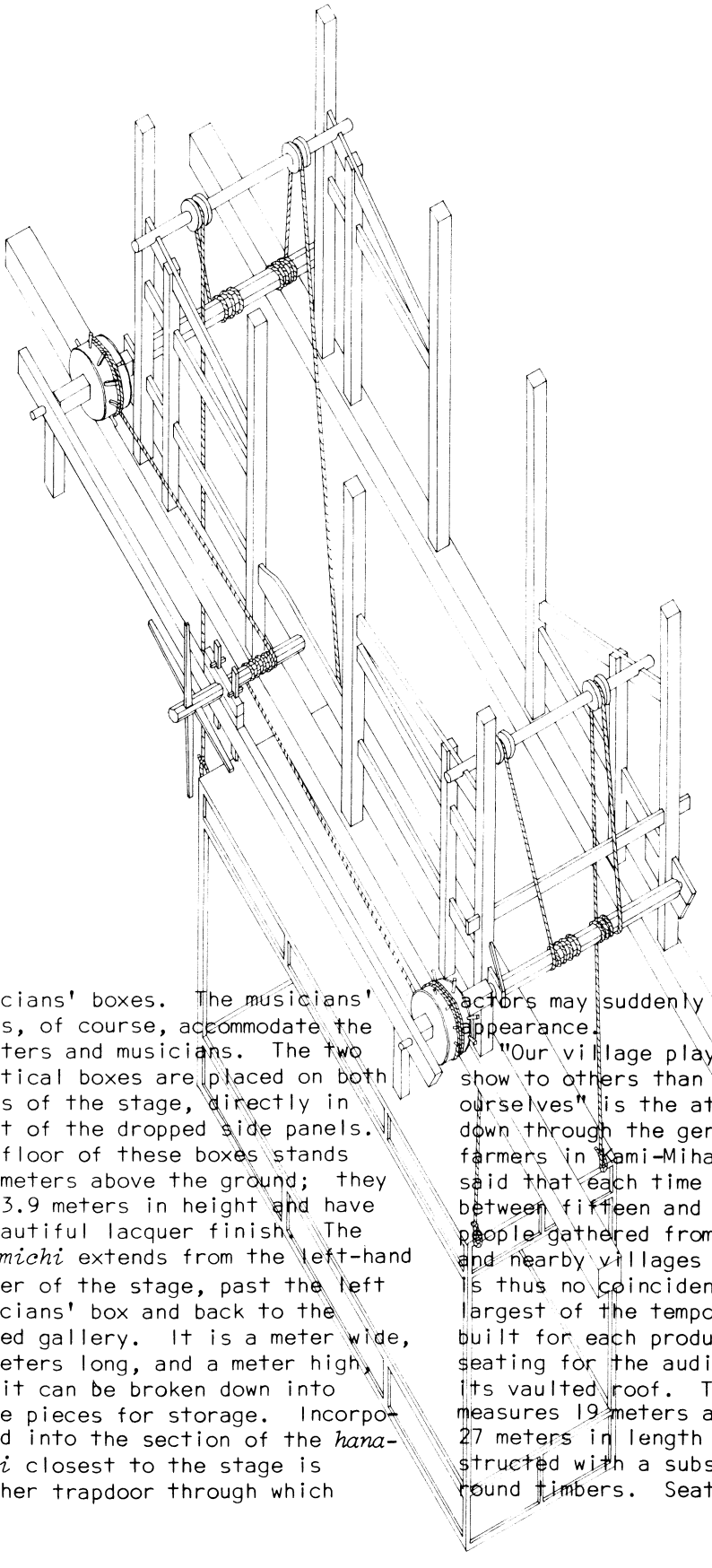
The most ingenious mechanism of the stage is its turntable and trapdoor systems. In the center of the stage is a revolving section 6.3 meters in diameter. Central to this turntable, moreover, is an oblong trapdoor 4.5 by 1.5 meters. Through this trapdoor a small, elevatorlike carriage called the *nijū*, 4.5 meters long, 1.5 meters wide, and 2.4 meters high, may be raised and lowered. The machinery for both the turntable and trapdoor apparatus is unified into a single complex that rides on one foundation stone set in the center of the area beneath the stage. Above the stage is a loft where the machinery for lowering a second *nijū* has been constructed.



The stage thus incorporates two *nijū*. With these two devices actors may be raised from and lowered to the stage from above or lifted to and lowered from stage-level from below. The lower *nijū*, moreover, may be operated in conjunction with the rotation of the turntable. In addition, the lower *nijū* is equipped with wheels and is thus capable of lateral movement across the stage surface formed by the dropped side panels. There should be no difficulty in imagining the dynamic scene changes made possible by the rapid operation of all these mechanisms. Operation, however, requires twelve men beneath the stage and eight men in the loft.

Stage settings are constructed out of four large frames 4.5 meters across and 2.2 meters in height, and a wall 9 meters long. The frames are hung from tracks carved into the beams above the stage and move laterally across the stage on wheels. Painted screens representing scenery are fitted into these frames, and they serve the same purpose as flats; 51 such screens are used. When the large frames are wheeled offstage, it is again the dropped sides that support them.

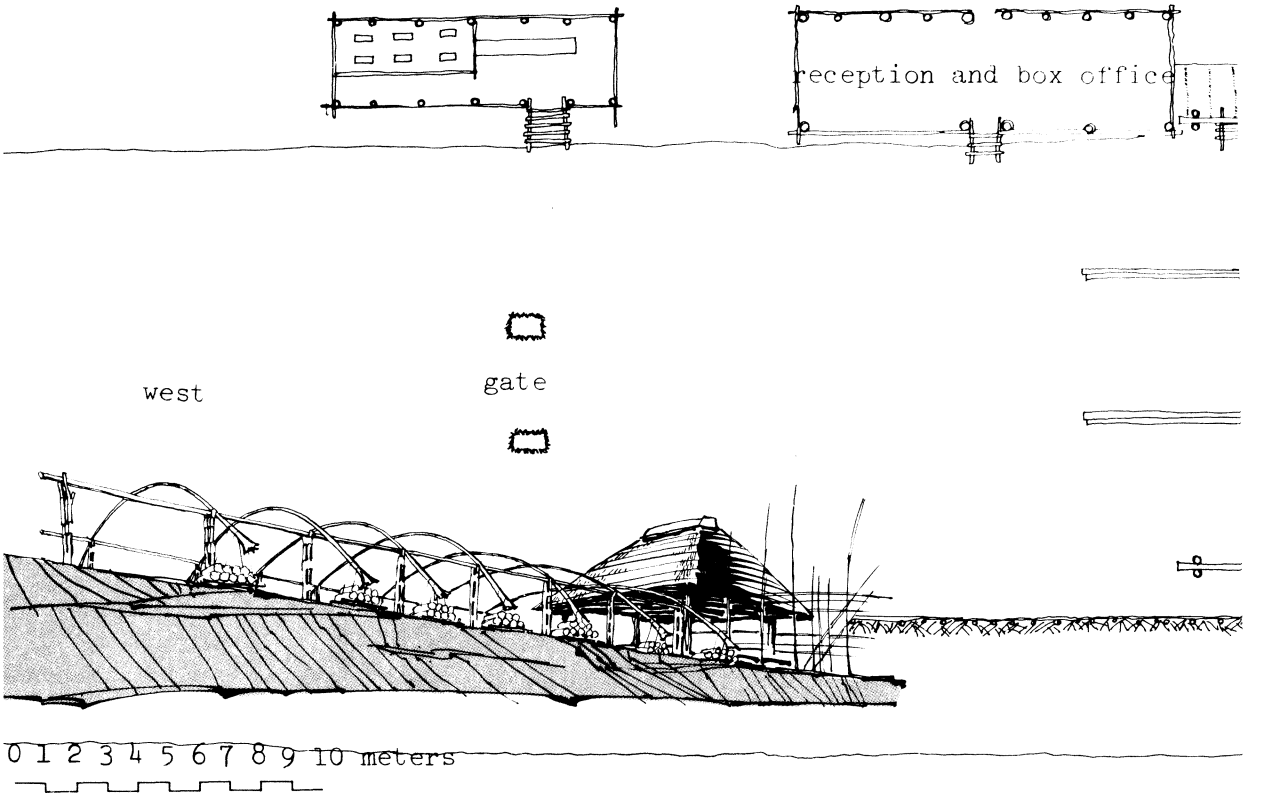
To the left (facing the stage) is a crude, 4.8 by 5 meter, floorless dressing room constructed out of oak timbers, bamboo, silkworm trays, rice-straw matting, and other materials. In front of the stage are the prefabricated *hanamichi* and



musicians' boxes. The musicians' boxes, of course, accommodate the chanters and musicians. The two identical boxes are placed on both sides of the stage, directly in front of the dropped side panels. The floor of these boxes stands 1.4 meters above the ground; they are 3.9 meters in height and have a beautiful lacquer finish. The *hanamichi* extends from the left-hand corner of the stage, past the left musicians' box and back to the raised gallery. It is a meter wide, 10 meters long, and a meter high, and it can be broken down into three pieces for storage. Incorporated into the section of the *hanamichi* closest to the stage is another trapdoor through which actors may suddenly make their appearance.

"Our village plays are more to show to others than to watch ourselves" is the attitude handed down through the generations of farmers in Kami-Miharada, and it is said that each time they performed between fifteen and twenty thousand people gathered from neighboring and nearby villages to watch. It is thus no coincidence that the largest of the temporary structures built for each production is the seating for the audience and its vaulted roof. The roof measures 19 meters across and 27 meters in length and is constructed with a substructure of round timbers. Seating for the

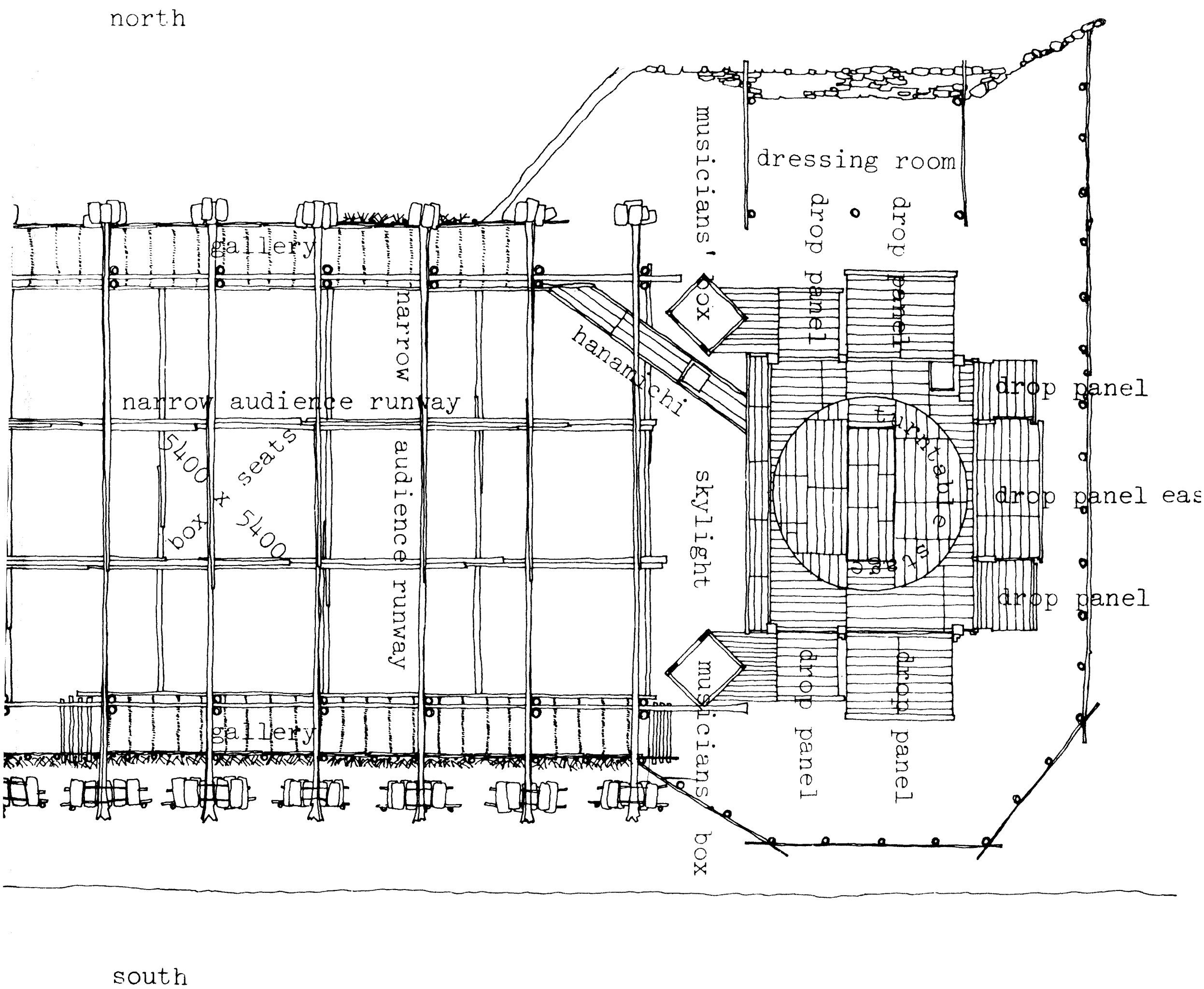
Complete Ground Plan
(The superstructure of the seating area is indicated by main beams only.)



audience uses the natural slope of the land that gently rises away from the stage. After the ground has been prepared, large wooden frames measuring 5 by 5.4 meters, each subdivided into fifteen boxes, are arranged to accommodate the audience. The "box seats" are thus nothing more than a dirt floor defined by a framework of cryptomeria timbers. The only other concession made to the audience is to lay crude, rice-straw matting over the bare earth. When the boxes are full, two cryptomeria timbers are lashed together and rested on supports approximately the same height as the shoulders of the seated spectators, to be used as a passageway in and out of the audience.

On both sides of the boxes are raised galleries 27 meters long, 1.8 meters deep, and 1.3 meters off the ground. The gallery to the left of the stage is made of dirt, utilizing the natural incline of the land, but the gallery to the right is constructed from wooden timbers.

In front of the galleries groups of three piles are driven into the ground in fourteen places, seven on each side, at intervals of 3.6 meters. These are used to support beams that run the length of the area, above the heads of the spectators in the gallery. Directly over and perpendicular to these beams, cryptomeria and pine



timbers are laid. These timbers measure 15 to 20 meters in length with a diameter of 15 to 20 centimeters, and they are used with their roots intact. On the left, these roots protrude beyond the gallery and are buried in the ground, whereupon rice bags filled with soil are piled over them. On the right, where it is impossible to bury the roots of the timbers, rice bags filled with soil are suspended from them. When this work has been completed, ropes are tied to the free ends of the timbers, which are then pulled downward. The ends of these timbers are then lashed together to form an arch.

These timbers form the main structure of the vaulted roof. Over them rafters and sheathing of bamboo are laid; then the bamboo-meshwork trays used for cultivating silkworms are spread across the entire surface of the roof, and finally these are completely covered with straw matting. The longitudinal rise of the roof is lowest near the front of the stage, growing higher as it moves away. At the arch's lowest point, the point nearest the stage, an area of the roof 3.6 meters wide and 1.8 meters deep is covered, not with the materials delineated above, but with *shōji* (delicate frames covered with paper, ordinarily used as doors and windows in the Japanese house) in order

to facilitate the acceptance of natural light.

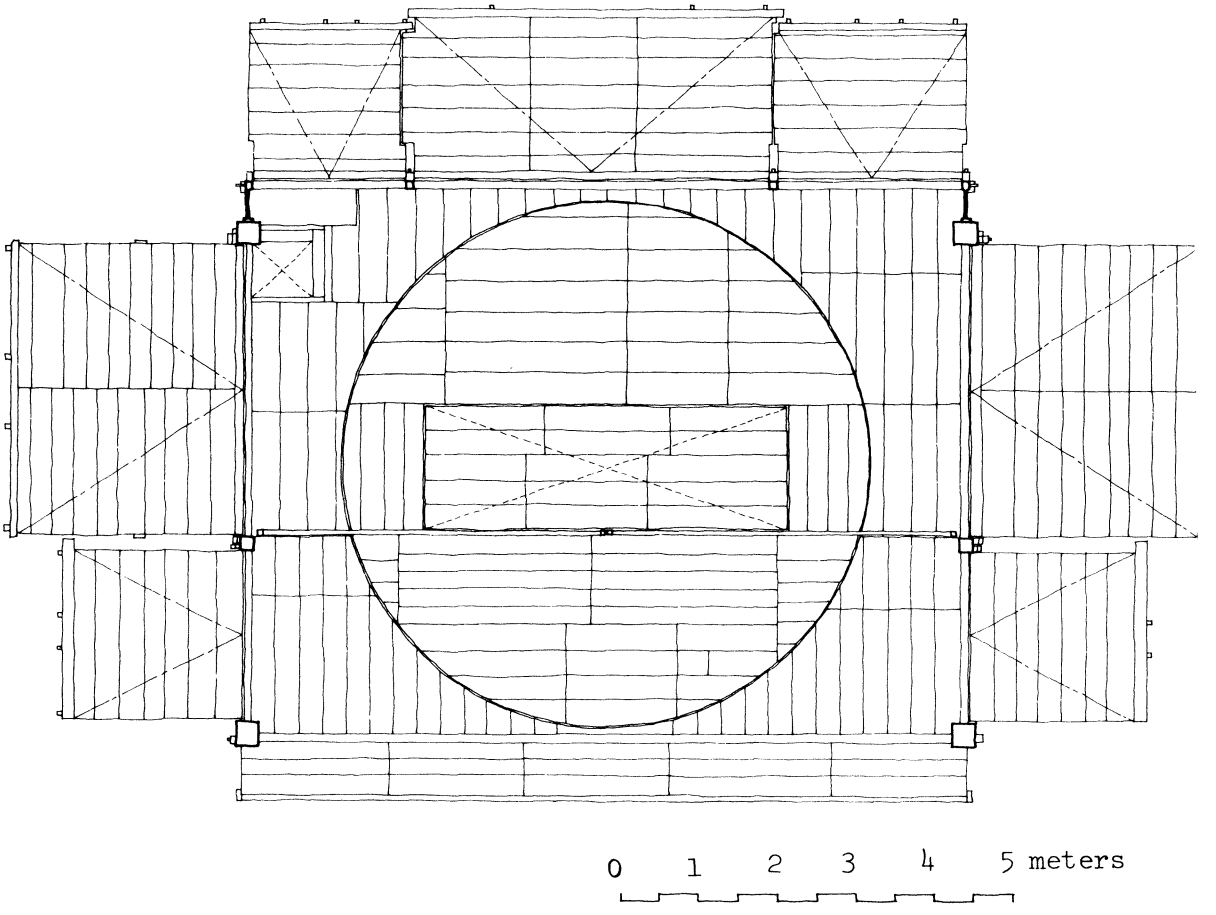
Above and behind the galleries an auxiliary roof and windbreak are built from bamboo and branches of the oak, then to be covered with straw matting. The wall runs from behind the right gallery, around the back of the stage, and finally meets the earthen embankment on the left.

The merciless layer of rice-straw matting covering the walls and roof, half buried in the earth, relenting only to grant the stingiest view of the roof of the stage itself, seems as shabby as the farmers who laid it. But in the gloomy cavern under that straw matting the eyes of thousands of farmers glitter. With Chōjirō's superb wooden stage and the ingenious machines it houses, scenes change with baffling rapidity, actors appear out of nowhere only to disappear without a trace, and the world with all its marvels falls to the farmers' amazed glance.

The last construction and performance in the theatre was for four days, February 4-7, in 1961. After months of preparation, work at the site began on January 28 and continued for six days powered by 1100 man days of labor contributed by farmers and friends.

1882. Chōjirō's grandson Matahachi directed the relocation of the stage from the grounds of

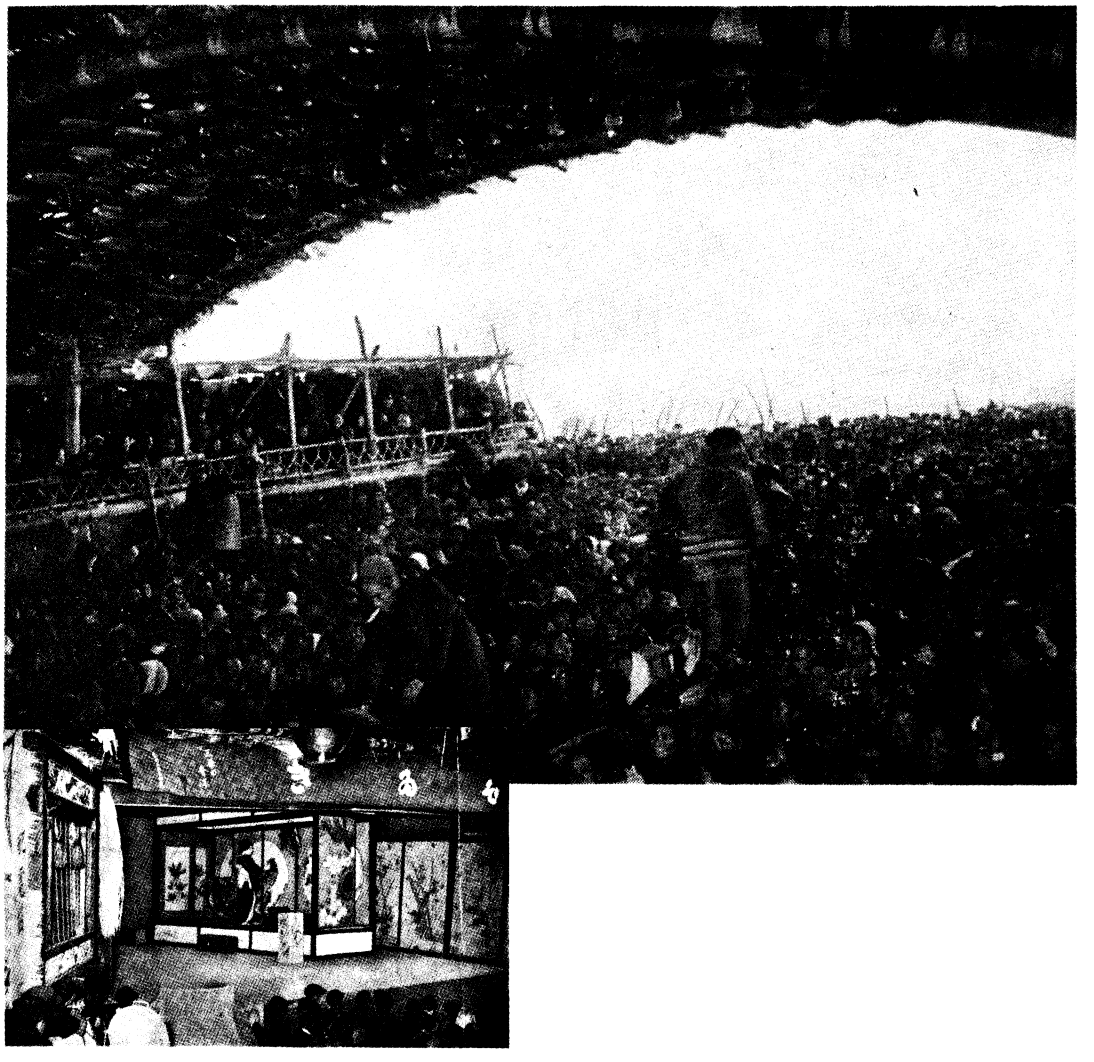
the Tenryūji into the fields. Great a carpenter as Matahachi is reputed to have been, he remained to the last unable to understand how to break the stage mechanism down for later reconstruction and thus had it transported intact to its new location. What sort of man might Chōjirō, this man so much a master of his craft, have been? All we know of him is legend. There is a story told that, when it came time to construct a bridge over the Tone River, Chōjirō constructed a model of the bridge he would build out of the oblong, donutlike copper coins known as *Tempōsen*, which so amazed the lord of the domain that he not only commissioned Chōjirō to build the bridge but gave him all the coins used in constructing its model. It is also said that a waterwheel called the *chōjiguruma* after its inventor was in use during Chōjirō's time, a waterwheel that would rise with the water and never be washed away even in the most disastrous of floods. And it is reported that Chōjirō even began to develop a man-powered, airplanelike conveyance with which he could make a pilgrimage to Ise Shrine. Regardless of the degree to which we are willing to accept these legends as fact, it does seem clear that the carpenter Chōjirō was a man of extraordinary skill and originality. It was this Chojirō who traveled to Osaka with



nothing more than a ruler, only to return home a master of theatre architecture to build his amazing Kabuki stage.

The first turntable stage to appear in Japanese theatres was built in 1758 at the Kado Theatre in Osaka. It was not until 1753, at the Ōnishi Theatre, the precursor of Osaka's Naniwaza, that the mechanism for raising a platform out of a trap in the stage was first developed, and drop-panels were conceived even later, at Osaka's Naka Theatre in 1761. Chōjirō built the stage in Kami-Miharada in 1819, a considerable period after these innovations had been made and established as a part of Japanese theatre design. Nevertheless, it was Chōjirō who first developed a mechanism for transporting actors, not merely up from below the stage, but down from the loft as well.

This Kabuki stage, standing unperturbed by the flow of time in the mulberry fields on the southern slopes of Mount Akagi, counterpoints the nostalgic tales told by withered old men and speaks to us today with the same life and warmth as ever of an age gone mad with the theatre.



The *wakashu* mentioned here differ from the *wakashu* mentioned in Hirosue's article. These were simply the young men who played the major roles in the Kabuki plays presented in this theatre.
--trans.

Soeda Hiroshi is an architect and instructor at Musashino University of Art.

Theatre Center 68/71 produced the fourth version of Satō Makoto's monumental *Nezumi Kozō: The Rat* in its black tent theatre between May 26 and July 4 of this year. This poster for the production, measuring one-hundred and ten by seventy-nine centimeters (approximately forty-four by thirty-two inches) and in twelve (count 'em) colors, is being offered to readers of **Concerned Theatre Japan** at U.S. $10.00 or the equivalent, including postage. Orders may be placed with **Concerned Theatre Japan**, Nishi-Azabu 3-1-14, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan 106.

Introduction

Satō Ren

My play *Red Eyes* was written in the summer and fall of 1967 and was performed the same winter and following spring by *Jiyū Gekijō* [The Freedom Theatre], a company that had only been founded a few short months before. Four years have passed since then, and as I again read through the play, my first, I am perhaps more impressed with its failings than with its strengths. Making minor adjustments in the text for its appearance in *Concerned Theatre Japan*, however, has only served to bring the play closer to the image of the well-made play. The fundamental difficulties inherent in the play are in many ways the same problems that have haunted modern drama in general, and, looking objectively at the work, I cannot resist the temptation to allow myself the self-satisfying sense that any work of drama is as much a product of its time as it is of its individual author. Below, as I describe some of the facts more or less essential to an understanding of the play, I would like to set down some thoughts on the relationship between the play and postwar Japanese history, while at the same time communicating the essence of my own criticisms of my work.

Postwar Cartoons

Born in 1940, I was raised on the hoopla of postwar democratic education. When our teacher asked us who we respected most, we shouted in unison, "General MacArthur!" We were not yet ten, but in every class our teachers repeated, "Japan has become a country of freedom and democracy. It is you who must nurture this new Japan." We had no comprehension of what that was supposed to mean, but I can remember unpleasant chills of embarrassment running up and down my spine. What interested us heirs to the new Japan at the time were Yamakawa Sōji's picture story *The Boy King* [*Shōnen Ōja*], serialized in juvenile magazines like *Shōnen* and *Omoshirobukku*, and Tezuka Osamu's long cartoon *Ambassador Atom* [*Atomu Taishi*]. Tezuka, who began drawing these long cartoon stories in 1947, remains even today, after more than twenty years, one of the most popular authors of cartoons for juveniles. A doctor of medicine, the young Tezuka used his knowledge of science to give his cartoons the imagination and dynamism of science fiction novels, and he enchanted the children of my generation with such images as a two-page spread of a rocketship roaring toward a distant galaxy. Today there is probably no Japanese in his twenties or thirties who did not read Tezuka's *Ambassador Atom* as a child. What remains of Tezuka's work for us today, however, is not the constant repetition of fragmented motifs of truth and justice but the expansive and beautiful pictures, the transparency and light that were otherwise unavailable to us who knew nothing but the gloom and ruins of postwar Japan. Tezuka's fragments of justice, nonetheless, gained him the approval of the guardians of juvenile morality, the PTA. Progressive teachers recognized his work as cartoons that "good children" could read with safety, and elementary school libraries changed their "nursery tales for good children, comic books for bad children" policy and made the unprecedented decision to stock Tezuka's work. In short, it was with Tezuka Osamu that Japanese comic books first ceased to be the opiate of the young and entered the realm of Culture.

Kamishibai

The kamishibai man always came around at the same time in the late afternoon. It was always the same side street where he parked his bicycle, and when they heard the sound of his wooden clappers, "bad children" left their games of hopscotch and make-believe sword battles to go and see. Admission

was the price of a piece of licorice or gumdrops, but payment turned into a game with the kamishibai man, where the children blew blowgun darts at a target or drew lots the kamishibai man had prepared in an attempt to win a prize or get two sticks of licorice for the price of one. The toughest kids and those who had bought the most candy occupied the positions directly in front of the kamishibai man's picture frame, while all the way in back, straining to see over the heads of fifteen or twenty other children, was always a boy with his little sister on his back. The child whose parents had refused to give him the money he needed, on the basis that the gumdrops and licorice sold by the dirty old kamishibai man were unsanitary, slowly appeared out of the shadow of a nearby telephone pole as soon as the show began.

Ordinarily a kamishibai program consisted of three features: a historical drama, a humorous cartoon, and a *shimpa* or modern drama. The historical dramas always involved the exploits of a master swordsman, while the humorous cartoons had almost nothing resembling a story and were meant only to make the children laugh. *Shimpa* were sentimental melodramas, featuring such pictures as street urchins gazing sadly into the shining show window of a gaily decorated shop.

When I decided to write *Red Eyes*, I went to the home of a man who had been both a kamishibai artist and a source from whom kamishibai performers could borrow picture sets, to discuss material for my play. He showed me two or three series, consisting of ten installments of ten pictures each, very short by comparative standards. It took me back to the days of my childhood to see the cardboard sheets on which the flimsy tempera pictures had been pasted, and the sets of pictures from the mid-50's that my informant's wife took out and showed me all had rounded corners from continuous handling. She told me how a kamishibai performer would leave home shortly after noon and travel to ten or fifteen different locations during the day. Most of the performers were handicapped ex-soldiers and older men unable to hold normal jobs, and I began to appreciate the sadness they must have experienced when television deprived them of their young audience. The artists who drew kamishibai were largely painters unable to support themselves in any other way, and among the works of the younger artists there seem to have been ideological and experimental works, as well.

Booklenders

It was not until I had matriculated into high school that I became aware of the existence of booklenders. Usually booklenders operated out of stalls only a meter deep and with perhaps four meters of frontage, tucked away in some corner of a shopping district. Beneath their naked lightbulbs, children generally considered "bad" by their parents searched for books of comics to borrow at ten to fifteen yen [3-4¢] a day.

The booklender's stock consisted mostly of crude picture and story books hardly comparable to the comics of Tezuka Osamu, but there was an unspeakable romance about the stuffy darkness that hung like a veil over the booklender's stall. The comic books available from booklenders were drawn and printed exclusively for them and were not sold in normal bookstores.

It was a little more than ten years ago that Shirato Sampei's *Ninja Bugeichō* [The Ninja's Martial Arts] and Maetani Koremitsu's *Robotto Santōhei* [Private-Third-Class Robot] appeared on the booklenders' shelves as "bad children's comics" and caused an overwhelming sensation. Both of these series, however, *Ninja Bugeichō* for its cruelty and gore and *Robotto Santōhei* for being a war comic, were placed on every available blacklist, although they could not be officially censored. *Robotto Santōhei* was a humorous comic centering on the exploits of the terribly clumsy Private-Third-Class Robot during the Second World War in China. Of course there were many comics that dealt with the war, but surprisingly few treated Japan's war in China. While the Japanese are willing to admit that they lost to America's resources, they have not been willing to recognize their defeat in China. Having lost his purpose, and caught in an unending and unwinable quicksandlike battle, Private-Third-Class Robot cut through the hypocritical penitence of Japan's postwar democracy and replaced it with an incisive description of the imperialistic nature of the war between the United States and Japan and Japan's war of aggression against China.

In contrast, Tezuka Osamu's Atom was conceived as a strong and just robot. Atom's exploits faithfully follow the pattern of textbook truth ("The just are strong"), and his image was perfectly congruent with that of the American occupation forces: "We won because we were right." We could not have gotten greater pleasure when, while we were in junior high school during the Korean War, the newspaper's daily maps of the war zone showed that the United Nations Forces (read: American army) could not win even though

they were "right."

As television spread and put an end to the kamishibai, which had for so long provided them with their livelihood, Shirato Sampei and his fellows could not afford the luxury of believing that "the just are strong." If it was to turn out that "the strong are strong," then the "bad children's comics" of Shirato and the others had to become strong, too, in order to survive.

In the epilogue to *Ninja Bugeichō* Shirato wrote that as he worked on it he had taught himself history and sociology. The work was begun in 1958 and not completed until October 1962, the final product running to twelve volumes averaging 200-250 pages each. Not only was Shirato maturing and becoming more sophisticated intellectually, but there was a new sureness about the way he drew his characters and composed frames and pages, and he displayed even more startling growth in the dynamic way he developed his stories. It was thus with the emergence of Shirato Sampei as a mature artist that the questions of why one writes, for whom one writes, what one writes, and how one writes were raised in the comic medium.

Ninja

Among the characters to appear most frequently in Shirato's work are *ninja*. The word *ninja* is comprised of two characters, one meaning person and the other meaning both to hide and to endure (pain, etc.). In comics aimed at children, a ninja can make himself disappear literally in a cloud of smoke simply by pointing his index finger toward the sky and putting his hands together, but historically the ninja were a combination spy and guerrilla in the employ of the established powers. Shirato's ninja differ from both of these, for his ninja are a combination of the modern champion athlete, scientist, and military tactician. For the most part Shirato's ninja are lone wolves who have fled from the professional ninja bands of the establishment.

Shirato's Characters

Just as there was never a robot with the tremendous strength of the robot Atom from *Iron Arm Atom* [*Tetsu-Ude Atomu*], there was never a ninja as powerful as Kagemaru in *Ninja Bugeichō*. Unlike Atom, whose strength is *given* to him by his creator, though, Shirato's characters *earn* their power through the most arduous training.

The story of Iwana, a ninja out of *Ninja Bugeichō* who could breathe through gills like a fish, is of course pure fiction. But perhaps more important than Iwana's ability to breathe under water

is the way he gained that ability. It seems that when he was a child his mother was murdered by the establishment and then sunk to the bottom of a pool twenty or thirty meters deep. Longing for his mother, the child tried to dive down to meet her. At first he was only able to dive two or three meters under the water, but after many years of tremendous effort he finally succeeded in reaching his mother. Then, armed with his special ability to survive beneath the surface of the waves, Iwana entered the struggle against oppression. As the story develops, Shirato's tale about a human being who can breathe under water suddenly moves out of the world of fiction and into the realm of reality. It is for this reason that in most of his works Shirato describes tactics of struggle developed out of the lives and agricultural techniques of ordinary farmers. It is this approach that is the real key to Shirato's work.

Atom never ever loses and never ever dies. Shirato created another fiction in his *Ninja Bugeichō*, the fiction of perfect disguise. In this extraordinarily long cartoon novel, the ninja Kagemaru appears amidst the farmers of every province to lead them against the evil powers of the feudal establishment and gives his life in their place, only to reappear like a phoenix to continue to haunt the forces of oppression. And yet *Ninja Bugeichō* is not the legend of a single hero. As we read we come to realize that Kagemaru is really the seven ninja of the Kage Band, who one by one disguise themselves as Kagemaru and play his role. We come to realize that Shirato's *Ninja Bugeichō* is not the legend of an individual hero but the legend of the nameless revolutionaries who, throughout history, have been the enemies of oppression and the friends of the people who have died as the bearers of change.

RED EYES

It was in 1960, while he was continuing his work on *Ninja Bugeichō*, that Shirato wrote *Red Eyes* [*Akame*]. It was the year of the tremendous mass demonstrations against the renewal of the United States-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, and every day I was leaving my second-year studies of Russian literature at the university and commuting to the demonstrations in front of the Diet. Shirato's eyes, however, were on the absolutely exclusive nature of the structure of power and its refusal to respond to the feelings and solidarity of "little people." It is the lowest class in society that takes the leading role in Shirato's work--in contemporary terms the

unorganized farmers and workers who remained far removed from the struggle against the Security Treaty. Having continued to draw cartoons in order to keep himself alive, Shirato searched for the moment when the impoverished and conservative masses, including himself, could rise up to inherit the earth. It was only natural that Shirato should have combined the conservatism of the masses with the absolute interrelationships in the world of nature and created *Red Eyes*.

The reason why Shirato found it necessary to write *Red Eyes* while working on *Ninja Bugeichō* is clear. In *Ninja Bugeichō*, Kagemaru was created as a rebel leader. But as he attempted to describe the birth and development of each of the composite figures in the image of Kagemaru, the realist Shirato realized that poverty and oppression do not lead directly to a man's becoming a revolutionary. The personal idiosyncrasies of individual psychology that must have been present as Shirato himself turned from drawing humorous cartoons to cartoons of struggle, for example, were nowhere to be found in the revolutionary prototype Kagemaru. Shirato thus came to realize that a necessary autonomy was missing from his historically objectivist work, and he wrote *Red Eyes* to depict the irrational, inner world of the rebel leader.

Running through nearly all of Shirato's characters is an obstinacy that refuses to believe in others and rejects kindness. In this consistency Shirato's vision of a world unmovable by tears or kindness is to be found. In contrast, *Red Eyes'* hero Matsuzō makes his appearance as a simple, whimpering man unable to understand the structure of the world in which he lives. He is the representation of all of us, including Shirato himself.

Ninja Bugeichō's Kagemaru appears out of the ranks of the masses and vanishes among them. In that work, the evil lord, the masses, and Kagemaru are all equally weighted, occupying equally the artist's interest. With the description of the proletarian Matsuzō and his thirst for revenge, however, a "hero" in the modern sense was born. The other characters in the story, the lord and farmers, populate and describe Matsuzō's world as do the rabbits, wildcats, and matchlock rifles. But because he is a modern hero, Matsuzō's life ends in madness and his drama in tragedy. When, by writing *Ninja Bugeichō*, Shirato discovered that the autonomy required for an answer to the question of why one struggles was absent from the simple image of justice and solidarity that had dominated his work, he selected

revenge as the sole believable basis for Matsuzō's actions, and with this Matsuzō's tragic end in madness was determined.

It is thus possible to view *Red Eyes* as the result of one artist's long struggle to escape the poverty implicit in the "socialism=realism" formula that had dominated left-wing literature and drama up through the 1950's. *Red Eyes* was an attempt to escape the reductionist method of left-wing literature, which broke down absolute relationships through sentiment and romanticism, by nominating revenge and individual mission as the source for action. Shirato's inability to transcend this individualistic logic, moreover, shares much in common with my own inability to transcend the weaknesses of my own character Kuroda Saburō.

This essay is not the place to undertake a description of the recent history of Japanese drama, but, generally speaking, it can be said that the plays written by playwrights like Fukuda Yoshiyuki during the late 50's and early 1960's represented a philosophical rebellion that, accompanying the comprehensive political and cultural upheaval of the Japanese new left during those years, suddenly repossessed for us art, politics, and sex. It would be no exaggeration to say that the next generation of playwrights, including Satō Makoto, Kara Jūrō, and myself, could not have appeared had it not been for the work of playwrights like Fukuda.

Fukuda's plays are fundamentally realistic. They are generally divided into two categories: plays like *Oppekepe* [*Oppekepe*, 1963] and *Legend of a Witch* [*Majo Densetsu*, 1969], plays centering around modern historical individuals; and plays like *The Sanada Uprising* [*Sanada Fū'unroku*, 1960-1962] and *Where is Hakamadare?* [*Hakamadare wa Doko Da*, 1964], agitprop plays based on historical legends, which describe the battles Fukuda had to fight as a theatre pioneer. The latter group of plays resembles *Ninja Bugeichō*: the "central character" in these plays is always a group, and they are written to cut through modern dramaturgy, the dramaturgy of heroes battling to protect the right. When all is said and done, however, the build-up of incidents is didactic and veiled in a mock objectivism, and the world described is, in the end, transparent and unsatisfying. With Fukuda's work it became clear that, just as it was not possible to depict an individual in a real situation by simplifying his world into a false analytic clarity, depicting the world through an individual only served to characterize that world as the individual's assailant. In the most general terms, Fukuda

Yoshiyuki and Shirato Sampei both treated the problem of cognizant autonomy: how to reconcile the individual and his world in the gap between missionary subjectivism and materialistic objectivity.

Given the time when they were conceived, it was only natural that the drawing and development of the stories in Shirato's early works should have been realistic. After *Ninja Bugeichō*, however, Shirato undertook *Kamuiden* [The Legend of Kamui] on a scale that dwarfed his earlier work. *Kamuiden* continues appearing in monthly installments even today with the same unchanging historical perspective; and the nameless rage and chaotic imagination that were Shirato's during the early 60's have been lost.

As Shirato has continued to pour out episode after episode in his enormous *Kamuiden*, a new generation of cartoonists like Tsuge Yoshiharu and Akasegawa Genpei has appeared and made impressive new innovations in the cartoon medium. In much the same way, Fukuda's rebellion against modern dramaturgy has been taken up by a new generation of playwrights like Satō and Kara to be developed into an entirely new type of theatre.

In this essay I have tried to give a brief and necessarily summary overview of the development of the dramatic and cartoon media in Japan during the 1960's. I hope that this essay will be of some help in illustrating the connections between the two and will provide some of the background necessary for the critical interpretation my play requires.

*

Saitō Ren is a playwright and student of Russian literature. He has been a member of Theatre Center 68 and wrote *Trust D.E.*, based on Ilya Ehrenburg's novel, and collaborated on *The Dance of Angels Who Burn Their Own Wings* (see **CTJ** 1-4), both Center productions. He is presently on leave from the Center to pursue independent work and study.

RED EYES

A Play in Three Acts by Saitō Ren
Based on the Cartoon Novel by Shirato Sampei

Red Eyes [*Akame*] was first performed by The Freedom Theatre [*Jiyū Gekijō*] in Tokyo from December 9 through December 24, 1967, and January 5 through January 21, 1968. It was subsequently restaged by The Freedom Theatre and toured to Yokohama, Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, and Hiroshima as part of Theatre Center 68 from September 25 through October 20, 1968.

Red Eyes was first published in Japanese under the title *Akame* in the May 1968 issue of *Higeki Kigeki* (#211).

Cast of Characters

Kuroda Saburō
Yoshi=Matsuzō=Priest (played by the same actor)
Sanae=Heita (played by the same actress)
Ono=Mosuke (played by the same actor)
Pop Kawanishi
Kageyama
Office Girl
Taguchi
Yoshi's Wife
Mozaemon
Tae
Chōzaburō
Ninja Master
Kiheiji
Hunter
Yasuke
Kayo
Tome
Granny
Farmers
Nobunao's Voice
Retainers' Voices

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ACT ONE

Scene 1

There is the sound of wooden clappers. It is not the resonant sound of the wooden clappers used in Kabuki, nor is it the lackluster sound of those heard during the dry winter months, warning householders of the hazards of fire. It is the housewives' busiest time of day, when the air is filled with the sound of their knives against cutting boards, dicing radish for the evening meal; or when, long white radishes still loaded in their shopping baskets, they have been collared and forced, for thirty minutes already, to exchange bits of small talk with old neighbor women, burning piles of autumn leaves. The sound heard then is the wooden clappers of the kamishibai. The sound grows louder and louder, and, dressed in a jumper, perhaps brown, perhaps grey, the Kamishibai Man *appears beside his bicycle. It seems his play has begun.*

In the distance, mountains still covered with unmelted snow and the homes of farmers can be seen. The sun is setting. Nearby the Tone River flows, and the sound of its currents might be heard, except that this is a kamishibai picture, and so in its place there is the Kamishibai Man's *Kansai drawl.*

Kamishibai Man: It is spring, the month of March, but in Kōzuke and the realm of Numata the land lies buried under a deep layer of snow. Kōzuke is what we know today as Gunma prefecture. We are close to the great river Tone and the home of a certain village headman.

The Kamishibai Man *withdraws this picture and reveals the next, showing the inside of the headman's house and a group of farmers prostrating themselves on the earthen floor of its*

entrance.

Kamishibai Man: The headman speaks to the prostrate farmers. "What cannot be done cannot be done. The Ryōgoku bridge must be built by next summer no matter what."

The Kamishibai Man *reveals the next picture. One of the farmers is pleading with the headman.*

Kamishibai Man: "But, your honor, five years ago there was the great famine, the year before last our crops failed, and now we're being taxed for the materials for the Ryōgoku bridge. But we don't even have enough to eat!"

The next picture is the face of an old farmer.

Kamishibai Man: "Finding an oak eleven yards high and more than a yard across at its narrowest point is no easy task. Six feet of snow cover the mountains, and even if we found such a tree it would take us forever to bring it down to the bed of the Tone River. Is there no hope of your honor interceding on our behalf?"

The sullen, rather handsome face of the headman.

Kamishibai Man: Sugimoto Mozaemon spoke coldly to the farmers. "Is that all you have to say? Then get out of here. I've more important things to do than inform Lord Nobunao of your miserable ups and downs!"

The next picture shows the farmers returning to their homes.

Kamishibai Man: "That's how our headman treats us. What can we do?" "We'll never make it through the winter." And so the farmers return to their homes, their last hope shattered. Meanwhile, back at the headman's home . . .

The Kamishibai Man *reveals the next picture. It shows Mozaemon's wife O'Gin appearing before her husband.*

Kamishibai Man: "O'Gin," Mozaemon summoned his wife. "I am going on a journey. Make the necessary preparations." "A journey?"

The next picture shows Mozaemon's face again.

Kamishibai Man: "I can no longer bear to watch the peasants' suffering. I shall go to Edo to appeal directly to the Shogun. I can no longer ignore the plight of Numata's 60,500 farmers."

The next picture shows O'Gin taking her husband's hand.

Kamishibai Man: "Dear husband, may your journey be swift and safe. Please do what you can for the farmers of Numata." "I will, O'Gin, I will." This was the reply Mozaemon gave his wife, but he could not look at her and averted his eyes.

In the next picture Mozaemon is looking away from O'Gin.

Kamishibai Man: "O'Gin, do you know what happened to the people of Sakura thirty years ago?" O'Gin smiled warmly. "There is not a farmer who does not know of the famous Sōgorō." How about you? Do you know about Sōgorō of Sakura? You don't? What are they teaching you children in school these days? Sakura is what we know today as Chiba prefecture. There was a great village headman there whose name was Sōgorō. He journeyed to Edo to appeal directly to the Shogun to relieve the farmers' suffering. In the end he was beheaded, and his wife and three children with him. Sōgorō had three children, one six, one five, and the youngest three. The five-year-old--yes, a boy like the lad over there--he had a huge boil on

this side of his neck. When the executioner raised the blade of his sword upward for the final blow, the child cried out, "Please cut from this side, sir, my boil hurts terribly." That boy had spirit. Only five years old he was, but he knew how to stand up like a man.

The Kamishibai Man *is lost in his own story.*

Kamishibai Man: What's that? Oh, yes, I was telling you about Mozaemon, wasn't I? When O'Gin heard of her husband's plans, she remained utterly composed and said, "In all the land there is not a farmer ignorant of Sōgorō's glory."

The next picture shows Mozaemon and O'Gin clasping hands.

Kamishibai Man: "Will you see me on this journey even though you know what fate befell the martyred Sōgorō?" "How could I take it upon myself to stop you, knowing of your readiness to give your life?" "Then you understand, O'Gin?" O'Gin took her husband's hands in reassurance.

The next picture the Kamishibai Man *shows is of Mozaemon making his way along the moonlit banks of the Tone River.*

Kamishibai Man: It was the first year of Jōkyō, 1684, and the March of a nascent spring when Sugimoto Mozaemon left his beloved wife and made his way toward Edo. Mozaemon was twenty-eight, and with the suffering of his people throbbing in his breast, it was toward Edo, toward Edo, that he made his hurried way. Now the scene changes, and we are in Edo.

Far away the sounds of the streets can be heard. The Kamishibai Man *reveals the next picture. The scene is before the Ōte Gate of Edo Castle, showing its pines and stone battlements. Mozaemon is making his appeal to a palanquin before the castle moat.*

Kamishibai Man: The magnificent palanquin of the Shogun's councilor is just about to pass through the Ōte Gate when a figure suddenly appears. "Please hear my plea! Your humble servant Sugimoto Mozaemon, headman of the realm of Numata in Kōzuke, kneels here for the farmers of Numata and begs you to hear their petition!" And so it was that Mozaemon forfeited his own life to save the 60,500 farmers of the three districts of Numata. It was the third year of Jōkyō, 1686, on the fifteenth day of the month of November.

The Kamishibai Man *reveals the next picture: two crucified figures, Mozaemon and O'Gin.*

Kamishibai Man: At the foot of the Tsukiyono bridge on the banks of the Tone River, Mozaemon and O'Gin were crucified. The voices of the farmers mourning Mozaemon's death . . .

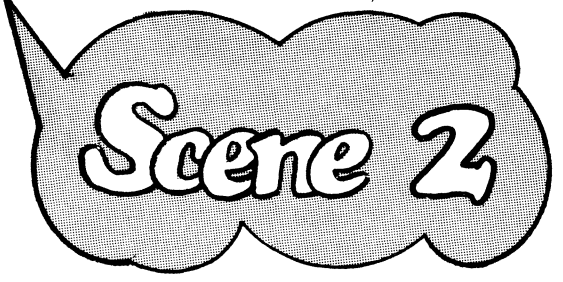
The Kamishibai Man *continues to speak as he removes the next picture. It is a wide-angle shot of the Tone River and the sun setting behind the mountains, with the words "The End" drawn in.*

Kamishibai Man: . . . echoed over the late autumn flow of the Tone River and across the mountains of Shinshū until the ends of time. And with this, "The Legend of Crucified Mozaemon" comes to an end.

The Kamishibai Man *brings his impassioned monologue to a close.*

Kamishibai Man: I'll bet you enjoyed Mozaemon's story. Pop Kawanishi's story begins tomorrow, so be sure not to miss it. What's that? A jawbreaker? Here you

are. That'll be five yen.



The Kamishibai Man *plays with the children as he sells them candy and tells their fortunes. The streetlights nearby come on and a voice is heard.*

----Hey, Saburō!

The youthful Saburō, *wearing a cotton pullover, stands beneath one of the streetlights. He appears to be a little cold. Before the streetlights came on, he had not been visible. The speaker is a good-looking man, taller than* Saburō, *wearing a rather unbecoming, quilted cotton jacket over his sweater.*

Saburō: You're back!

----I arrived at Ueno Station at four and wondered what you were up to. By the way, this is Sanae.

The speaker is Ono Makoto. *Having assumed that* Ono *was alone,* Saburō *is surprised to see someone appear from behind him.* Sanae *is wearing wooden clogs and a man's white shirt.*

Ono: Saburō. I met her in Akita.

Saburō: Pleased to meet you.

Sanae: I begged him to let me go with them.

Ono: She appeared backstage asking for the "conductor."

Sanae: It was the first time I'd ever seen puppet theatre. I was watching, but I couldn't stay in my seat. When I get that feeling, I have to get involved myself.

Ono: You'd better not let her see your kamishibai.

Sanae: Kamishibai?

Ono: That. It'll begin soon. This fellow draws the pictures for the kamishibai. But he's really a painter.

Sanae: Are you a painter?

Saburō: I'd like to be.

Ono: The crowd hasn't grown, has it?

Saburō: They say it's doubled since last year, the number of television sets in Tokyo. Been thinking about leaving Tokyo. We were discussing it at Pop Kawanishi's the other day.

Ono: The standard of living in the Northeast must be pretty low, there was hardly a television set to be seen. We had audiences like Sanae here, who'd never seen a puppet play before. One of our sponsors up there kept saying how we were a Bunraku troupe from Tokyo. Oh, he's begun your routine.

The Kamishibai Man *has begun drawing cartoons. They are the funny kind based on simple one-liners. He seems to be enjoying playing his role, but unfortunately his voice can't be heard.*

Saburō: I didn't come to see my own stuff.

Ono: Yoshi does all right, though, doesn't he? How's Chō, by the way?

Saburō: He quit.

Ono: Why?

Saburō: I don't know. He just left a note on his desk saying, "Sorry."

Ono: But he'll come back.

Saburō: At the beginning I thought so too, and Pop Kawanishi said he would. But it's been two weeks. Today I sold his rig.

Ono: Kawanishi must be feeling terrible. Let's go see him tonight.

Saburō: He sits looking at the television tower they built in Shiba and cussing under his breath.

Ono: Can you see it this far away?

Saburō: You can see it from the second floor of Pop's place. Way up on top there's a light that goes blinking on and off. "The B29 bombers came from that direction, too," he says. The night Chō quit we bought some sake and took it up to the second floor of Pop's place. Yoshi drank himself under the table. He kept talking about his wife--it was all we could do to calm him down.

Ono: You were the last four left, too.

Saburō: "It's only a matter of time," Pop was saying that night.

Ono: He's been in this business since he was fourteen, too, hasn't he?

Saburō: It's been twenty-seven years, he says.

The two men are silent for a moment. **Yoshi's** *excited monologue can be heard through their silence. He is just reaching the high point in a slapstick cartoon routine.* **Sanae** *has approached him and is utterly lost in his act.*

Ono: Yoshi really throws himself into those stories.

Saburō: Yes, he's trying to keep kamishibai alive all by himself. He's even taken to lecturing Pop Kawanishi. At least there's one enthusiastic face at Pop's office.

Ono: Oh, look, he's finished.

Sure enough, the kamishibai is over and **Yoshi** *is gathering the various implements of his trade together.* **Sanae** *watches him with unswerving attention.* **Ono** *and* **Saburō** *approach* **Yoshi.**

Ono: Yoshi.

Yoshi: Oh, it's you, Mr. Ono, when did you get back?

Sanae: You were certainly wonderful.

Ono: This is Sanae. She's recently joined my troupe.

Yoshi: I thought I noticed someone sneaking in a look for free.

Sanae: I'm sorry.

Ono: His name is Yoshimura. When he's not drinking he's really not a bad sort.

Yoshi: Just call me Yoshi.

Sanae: You mean you're supposed to pay to watch?

Yoshi: Of course you're supposed to pay. We're not doing this for charity, you know. How do you think we make enough money to live?

Sanae: Are you supposed to buy a ticket?

Yoshi: You're supposed to buy a jawbreaker or licorice.

Sanae: I see. Just a second.

Sanae *searches through the*

pockets of her jeans. Yoshi *is flustered.*

Yoshi: That's not what I meant. It was only a joke, a joke. Ono, you certainly brought a strange one around this time. But it has been a long time, hasn't it? Two months. This is an occasion for a toast, but my barrel's empty, I'm afraid.

Ono: Mine isn't. I brought a bottle of local brew from Akita. How about it? The taste of sake's not the same without your complaints to go with it!

Yoshi: Well, I've got better things to do than improve the taste of your sake. I've got a mountain of talk stored up. It's been tough. It's really been hard these past two months.

Ono: I heard Chō quit on you, too.

Yoshi: Let's not even talk about it. The whole thing makes me sick to my stomach. When I think that I actually lived under the same roof with him it makes my blood boil. Once a man's begun something he's got to see it through. Otherwise he isn't worth bunk. But you know, Ono, even if that's the kind of man he was, I sort of miss him now that he's gone. Even with Saburō and me in the house, it still feels like something's missing, and that's a fact. The three-mat room's cold and empty.

Ono: Listen, Yoshi. . . .

Yoshi: Hm?

Ono: Sanae, couldn't she stay in Chō's room? I've already got more people staying at my place than I know what to do with. I don't know where to put her.

Yoshi: It's all right with me if Saburō doesn't mind. Hey, what are you doing!

Yoshi *barks. Actually,* Sanae, *interested in the implements for the kamishibai, has been meddling with them, abetted by* Saburō. Sanae *jumps, frightened by* Yoshi's *anger.*

Yoshi: It may not look like it, but those are the tools of my trade, the next most important thing to life itself. I'll not have them played with like toys!

Saburō *hurriedly cleans up, trying to placate* Yoshi.

Yoshi: What was it now? I had something to say to Saburō.

Ono: Listen, Saburō, you wouldn't mind if Sanae moved into Chō's old room, would you?

Yoshi: That's it! Ono wants us to lend this kid Chō's room.

Ono: She's brought money from home, so she should be able to pay a little rent.

Sanae *is a little taken aback, as are the others.*

Saburō: I guess it'd be all right. It doesn't make any difference to me.

Ono: Okay, then it's settled.

Yoshi: Starting today we're back to a merry threesome.

Sanae: Um. . . .

Ono: Oh, don't mind Yoshi, he's just a little under the weather today, that's all.

Sanae: But he yells. . . .

Yoshi: It's a habit I picked up in the military.

Ono: They call him Manchurian Yoshi.

Sanae: Did you go to war? Was

it awful?

Yoshi: Naw, not that many get themselves killed.

Sanae: Like army colonels?

Yoshi: I was a corporal.

Sanae: Is a corporal better than a colonel?

> **Ono**, *who has not seen his old friend for a long time either, has been talking simultaneously with* **Saburō**:

Ono: How about her? Really something, isn't she? It's going to be fun.

Saburō: How old is she?

Ono: She says she just graduated from high school this spring, so. . . .

> *As* **Ono** *says this, everyone breaks out laughing at* **Sanae's** *question, "Is a corporal better than a colonel?"*

Ono: Listen, Saburō, how about coming over to my place?

Saburō: Today?

Ono: No, that's not what I mean. Wouldn't you consider doing puppet plays? Kamishibai is. . . .

> **Ono** *abandons this train of thought for a moment and looks at* **Yoshi**, *who has been speaking with* **Sanae**.

Yoshi: See, beneath colonel there's major and captain, and below them there's lieutenant, second lieutenant, master sergeant, sergeant, and then corporal.

Sanae: Is a corporal at the very bottom?

Ono: It's hopeless. She's too much for you.

> *This follows directly upon* **Ono's** *"Kamishibai is. . . ."*

Yoshi: Not at all, not at all. There's more. Lance corporals, Pfc's, and privates. The new recruits were more afraid of the corporals than anybody. You know, just like in the comic strip "Pfc. Pooch."

Sanae: "Pfc. Pooch?"

> *While this conversation is going on,* **Ono** *is speaking softly to* **Saburō**.

Ono: See, one more of the art forms of the masses is disappearing. I can't give up now.

Yoshi: Hey, Saburō, she doesn't know about "Pfc. Pooch." I guess she's from what you call the postwar generation, isn't she?

> **Saburō** *addresses* **Yoshi**.

Saburō: Yoshi, I'm thinking of quitting cartoons.

Yoshi: Saburō! Look, Saburō, today was especially bad. Usually at least ten people come to watch.

> **Yoshi** *has spoken these words in a loud voice, and* **Ono** *has heard the exchange between the two men.*

Yoshi: Television's only a passing fad. Pretty soon the kids will get tired of it and come back to kamishibai. Look at the hula-hoop. Last month it was bigger than anything, but this morning's paper said how the makers are cutting off production. See, it's what you call a fad. These are only bad times. People always go after anything that's new.

Ono: But, Yoshi, television's different from the hula-hoop. How much do you think that tower cost? 2.8 billion. 2.8 billion, that's how much. The hula-hoop. . . .

Yoshi: Yeah, but kamishibai will come back. Something that's gone on like this for more than ten years since the war isn't going to disappear that easily. Right? You see what I mean, don't you?

Saburō: No, that's just not the way things are. I'm thinking about quitting cartoons and drawing history.

Yoshi: Oh.

Saburō: What do you think?

Yoshi: I don't know. I guess I think you should do whatever you think best. But look, you've just gotten to the point where you can draw a decent cartoon. It would be a shame, that's all. It hasn't been easy for me these past three years, either.

Saburō: But the reason I'm thinking about doing historical dramas. . . .

Sanae: I'm getting cold.

Ono: I suppose so, the way you're dressed.

Sanae *is stamping her feet.*

Ono: Okay, look, Yoshi, would you mind taking Sanae with you? I've got some things to talk over with Saburō.

Yoshi: All right.

Sanae: Sorry to trouble you this way.

Ono: Thanks a lot.

Yoshi: See you at the house later, then.

Saburō: Okay.

Yoshi *and* Sanae *begin walking.*

Yoshi: How about that? Look how the stars are out tonight.

Sanae: There are twice as many in Akita.

Yoshi: You don't know what the sky is like over Manchuria.

For a moment there is silence.

Ono: How about it, Saburō?

Saburō: Puppet plays, huh?

Ono: Things aren't going well for me either, but I've got the feeling that I can at least make a go of it.

Saburō: I see.

Ono: Join my troupe, come on.

Saburō *is silent.*

Ono: I'll speak to Kawanishi for you.

Saburō: No, you don't have to do that.

Ono: I know it doesn't do you justice to ask you to do the backdrops for a bunch of puppets, but the way things are now you don't even have enough money to buy paint.

Saburō: Thanks.

Ono: Then you'll come, won't you?

Saburō: I won't quit kamishibai.

Ono: Why? Because of Yoshi?

Saburō: There's that too.

Ono: I understand how you feel, but. . . .

Saburō: It's not a matter of how I feel. There's one more play I want to draw.

Ono: But it's only a matter of time, don't you see? A few more television sets and you're fin-

ished.

Saburō: That's why I'll draw it. Before, kamishibai was only an excuse for my drawings. But now, not only don't I have enough money for paint, it's getting to the point where I'm not going to have enough for food, either. How can I quit now?

Ono: That's some argument.

Saburō: The night Chō left I dragged Yoshi back from Pop Kawanishi's place. I put him to bed and began the work I had to finish by the following day. As I was working I began to laugh, laugh at myself trying to think up a good gag. I mean, there I was sitting with nothing in my stomach, trying my damnedest to think up a good joke--it was absolutely ridiculous. Now I want to draw something really important.

Ono: Is that why you want to quit cartooning?

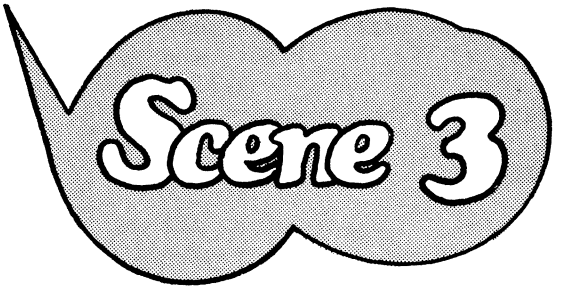
Saburō: Yes. I'm thinking of drawing "The Legend of Crucified Mozaemon."

Ono: Mozaemon? I guess it wouldn't do any harm to draw some more of that.

Saburō: I'm thinking about starting tonight. I've got it pretty well thought out. It's a moonlit night over the fields along the Tone River. Mozaemon's house.

It slowly grows dark.

Saburō: There is the sound of woodsmen's axes.



There is the sound of the river and of trees being felled. Then **Yoshi's** *voice is heard.*

----What are you going to do about Mozaemon's personality?

The rising lights reveal the broad, matted room and dirt entranceway of a farmer's house. **Mozaemon** *is napping.*

----That's entirely different from what I had in mind.

Just then a woman's voice can be heard in the distance.

----Trout for sale! Fresh trout for sale!

----Your wife, what kind of person was she, Yoshi?

----What kind of question is that to ask all of a sudden?

A comely young woman enters.

----Good evening. Is the lady of the house at home?

Mozaemon *opens one eye and says, "O'Gin?"*

----Oh, your honor, are you back?

Mozaemon: Is that you, Tae? I returned this morning at dawn.

Tae: But it's well past noon by now.

Mozaemon *yawns ostentatiously and gets to his feet.*

Mozaemon: Don't just stand there, come in. Selling trout, are you?

Tae: Yes, your honor.

Mozaemon: How's business today?

Tae: Your honor went to bed at dawn, but that's when I got up. Matsuzō was still sleeping.

Mozaemon: Were the fish biting?

Tae: I should say not. The water's full of mud. I was lucky to hook anything at all.

Mozaemon: Full of mud?

Tae: They're floating logs for the Ryōgoku bridge. That's what does it.

Mozaemon: But you certainly know how to earn your keep, don't you, Tae?

Tae: Matsuzō is a poor tenant farmer, and all his crops go for taxes. He says all we have to depend on is what little I can earn.

Mozaemon: You're a remarkable girl, Tae.

Tae: I do what suits my fancy. I deserve no praise from others.

Mozaemon: Does it suit your fancy to be with the one you love, even if he's only a tenant farmer?

Tae: Yes, your honor. Matsuzō's always saying how we owe you everything for bringing us together. What with the labor tax, though, we've hardly the time to hold each other.

Mozaemon: That's a sassy wench! Now I hear you're expecting a child.

Tae: It's been four months already.

Mozaemon: Well that's a piece of good news. But, Tae, you take care of yourself. You'd best go easy on the trout fishing. You go splashing about in the winter Tone and you'll catch your death.

Tae: We can't afford such luxuries. If only the lumbering for the new bridge would end soon. . . . By the end of the year Matsuzō will be a father. If we could only satisfy the labor tax, then we could begin to work and save. We'll have to do some hard farming until our child takes a wife. We don't mind working hard, but we want to make things easier for our son. When will the labor taxes end, your honor?

Mozaemon: I've been discussing that very subject with the headmen of twenty other villages. We talked until sunrise, but there wasn't a good idea to be heard.

> **Tae** *is silent, her eyes cast downward. Just then four farmers enter, carrying axes and sickles.*

Tae: Matsuzō!

Matsuzō: Tae, are you here too?

Mozaemon: She dropped in a little while ago.

Tae: Matsuzō, his honor says the headmen's meeting didn't get anyplace.

> *The assembled farmers express surprised disappointment and look at* **Mozaemon.**

Mozaemon: We did discuss a great many things, but. . . .

Farmer 1: But, your honor, what do you expect us to do?

Mozaemon: There isn't anything to do.

Farmer 2: Nothing to do? Then

what good is there in discussions?

Farmer 3: You of all people should know the position we're in.

Matsuzō: Listen, Tae, we've got some things to discuss with his honor. Your being here doesn't help.

Tae: All right. I've still got some fish to sell anyway. Don't be too long, then.

Matsuzō: I won't.

> **Tae** *leaves. "Trout for sale!"* **Tae's** *voice can be heard a short distance away.*

Mozaemon: It's because we understand what you are up against that we put everything else aside and risked meeting together. But what cannot be done cannot be done.

Farmer 1: Your honor seems calm enough, but what do you expect us to do?

Farmer 3: We had all our seed rice confiscated to make up for our taxes. What are we supposed to harvest come fall?

Farmer 2: The only one to gain by building the Ryōgoku bridge is his lordship Nobunao. If you are going to take his lordship's part, we'll think twice before listening to you again.

Mozaemon: I am the headman of this village. Are you men trying to set yourselves up against me?

Farmer 2: If your honor is setting himself up with his lordship Nobunao to torture us, we have no other choice.

Mozaemon: Torture you? It's we headmen that appreciate your hardships more than anybody. Is this the thanks I get for doing my best to have your taxes lightened? If this is the way you're going to act, I see no reason to feel responsible. Do you all feel the same way as Chōzaburō? Do you? Matsuzō, how about you?

> **Matsuzō** *is silent.*

Farmer 3: Matsuzō, don't you be holding your piece. Say something.

Mozaemon: Well? Can you say I haven't worried about you? Who was it that found a real farmer wench for the miserable peasant likes of you? Well? Who was it that came bowing and scraping and promising to do anything if he could have Tae for his wife?

Chōzaburō: That's different.

Mozaemon: Chōzaburō, who was it that lent you seed rice the winter before last? Think about it. Who has your interests closest to heart?

Chōzaburō: I paid you back the following autumn. And at a high rate of interest at that. Money's the only kind of interest close to a headman's heart. You headmen live off us farmers. Just let a village go to hell. It's the headman who's got more to lose than anybody.

Mozaemon: I see. Well, Chōzaburō, if that's the way you feel I will not be lending you any more seed rice. Not under any circumstances. I won't be figuring how to get water to your paddies, either. That's the way you want it, isn't it?

> **Chōzaburō** *is silent.*

Matsuzō: Wait, your honor. Chōzaburō didn't mean what he said. It's just that we're so helpless that, well. . . . It's thanks to your honor that we're alive today.

Farmer 1: Apologize, Chōzaburō. We're sorry, your honor, we didn't

mean what we said.

Chōzaburō *bows remorsefully with the rest.*

Mozaemon: If you men understand how I feel, that's all that matters. All I have to say is this: The lords of Sanada are now facing the greatest crisis since Sekigahara. I know your lives are hard. But I have a greater hardship to bear, a hardship you men do not understand. His lordship Nobunao has hardships of his own to bear, too. Without understanding what we're up against, you can only make things worse with your selfish demands. His lordship Nobunao appreciates the suffering of the farmers in his domain more than anyone. That doesn't mean, though, that he can break his promise to the Shogun. Perhaps he doesn't say it right out, but I'm sure his lordship hopes you'll have the courage to bear your hardships until the timber for the new bridge has been felled. All the headmen know your suffering. That's why we're trying to come up with ways to have your land taxes lessened and get at least some token rebate on your labor taxes, too. But these things have got to be discussed and worked out together.

Farmers: We're sorry for what we said.

Chōzaburō: I understand better now, your honor.

Farmer 1: We're depending on your honor. Please do what you can.

Mozaemon: If you understand my position, that's all that matters. You'd best explain things to the rest of the village. The sooner the work is completed the better. Everything's clear, then, isn't it?

The farmers press their foreheads to the ground in supplication. As they do this, two more farmers enter, carrying a stretcher improvised from a door panel and covered with a sheet of crude straw matting. Mozaemon *rises to his feet.*

Mozaemon: What's happened?

He lifts a corner of the straw matting and peers underneath. It is Tae.

Mozaemon: Tae!

Matsuzō: Tae!

Matsuzō *leaps to the stretcher. He takes his wife and cradles her head in his arms.*

Farmer 4: His lordship Nobunao was out riding.

Farmer 5: He said, "There's a succulent morsel."

Farmer 4: Tae tried to run away, but his lordship caught her. . . .

The farmers raise voices of mixed rage and sorrow.

Matsuzō: What crime had she committed? I'll kill him!

With this, Matsuzō *picks up a sickle and dashes toward the door.* Mozaemon *grabs his staff and strikes* Matsuzō *to the ground.*

Mozaemon: You go running out of here swinging that sickle and you'll wind up like Tae.

Matsuzō: You'll never understand!

Matsuzō *gets to his feet and tries to leave again, but* Mozaemon *again strikes him down. When* Matsuzō *rises this time, he turns and moves to attack the headman. Shocked by* Matsuzō's *fury, the rest of the farmers are silent.* Farmer 1 *and* Farmer 2 *restrain him, say-*

ing, "Stop it! That's enough now!" Mozaemon *rains blows on the helpless* Matsuzō *and knocks him to the ground. Then the slow beating of a drum and a man's voice are heard. The voice is* Yoshi's.

----With this, Chōzaburō flung himself on Mozaemon.

Chōzaburō *is flinging himself on* Mozaemon.

----But Mozaemon beat Chōzaburō to the ground.

Chōzaburō *is lying unconscious on the floor.*

----That was when the farmers . . .

The four remaining farmers raise their axes and move toward Mozaemon.

----. . . who had never known anything but painful resignation, rose up.

All motion on the stage freezes and the lights dim, revealing a kamishibai picture depicting the same scene. This picture is removed, and the next shows Matsuzō *embracing* Tae.

----Matsuzō embraced Tae and locked the sorrow of that moment in the vault of his heart. "That swine Nobunao! I'll see him dead!" was the vow he made quietly under his breath. But will the poor farmer Matsuzō really be able to avenge himself against the great lord Nobunao?

The lights dim and a different section of the stage grows light. Saburō *is there with a man some years past middle age.*

Scene 4

----Your "Other Legend of Crucified Mozaemon" was exciting.

Saburō: I'm afraid it didn't go exactly as I wanted it to.

----In the next episode will Mozaemon appeal directly to the Shogun?

Saburō: That's the trouble, Pop, Mozaemon won't appear anymore. Does that seem strange?

----Not particularly, but. . . .

From the fact that this older man is being called Pop, we might assume him to be none other than Pop Kawanishi. *But he certainly does not cut a very patriarchal figure. Appropriately enough, he is wearing a suit, but the coat is light blue, faded from exposure, while the trousers are a light brown cotton.*

Kawanishi: Will Matsuzō be able to avenge Tae's death?

Saburō: I hope so.

Kawanishi: You hope so? Don't you know?

Saburō: All I know is that I wanted Matsuzō to appear in the story. Not a dashing hero or a master swordsman, but. . . .

Kawanishi: The way things are going, it'll be difficult to keep him from becoming one or the other.

Saburō: Do you really think so?

Kawanishi: I understand how he, er, Matsuzō feels, but. . . I guess I'm afraid you're too involved with him. In other words, his rage isn't the rage of the masses, it isn't everyone's rage. The way the story's going now, his revenge is entirely personal. The problem is how he goes about finding the opportunity to bind divided weakness into united strength. Otherwise you'll have no alternative but to make him a dashing hero or master swordsman. You'd do well to look through a few history books, that's my opinion.

Saburō: Yes, but once united will they really be able to win?

Kawanishi: Now look. . . you stop by my house tomorrow. I'll lend you some things to read.

Saburō: That would help.

Kawanishi: Listen, though, Saburō, wouldn't you like to do some cartooning?

Saburō: Isn't there any hope for historical dramas?

Kawanishi: That's not what I mean. Books of cartoons, you know, the kind they have for children at the booklenders'. A man from a publishing company came by and saw your work and said he'd like to have you do one. Wouldn't you like to give it a try?

Saburō: I don't feel like drawing cartoons. For the time being . . . I can't really say why, but. . . .

Kawanishi: Why not?

Saburō: I guess maybe the meaning of drawing kamishibai has changed for me.

Kawanishi: I know it's partly my fault, but, the way things are going, you eventually won't be able to draw anything at all.

Saburō: I'm able to scrape up enough to live. As long as I can eat, I'd like to continue what I'm doing.

Kawanishi: That's just it. There were letters from Shizuoka and Hamamatsu today.

Saburō: What did they say?

Kawanishi: They said it's no good anymore. The letter from Hamamatsu said that they don't even have enough money to return the pictures we sent. Television's already spread out into the provinces.

Saburō: Oh.

Kawanishi: I don't have the heart to tell Yoshi. But you're not a man to go down with kamishibai. I don't want to see you get involved any more deeply.

> **Saburō** *is silent.*
> **Yoshi's** *voice, narrating a kamishibai, becomes audible.*

----"What's that? You haven't gathered the annual tribute?" "Your lordship!"

Kawanishi: In any event, cartoons will give you more money than you're getting now.

Saburō: Thank you, anyway.

----"Why haven't you done something?" "Yes, your lordship. The harvest was poor this year, and the farmers are suffering terribly."

Kawanishi: Even if you draw another play, you won't be able to perform it. There's no alternative but to send the old plays around the circuit again. I've been thinking about going out into the streets myself.

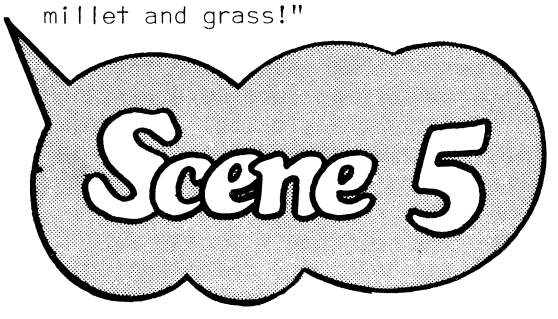
----"Imbecile! Do you think you can force them to pay their taxes by sympathizing with them?"

Saburō: Pop, won't you let me draw just this one?

Kawanishi: Do you think Matsuzō's got a chance?

Saburō: I don't know, but I can't quit now.

----"Listen, those farmers aren't going to die for want of a few sacks of rice. Let them eat millet and grass!"



It grows dark. Only **Yoshi's** *voice carries over from the last scene. His pictures are visible. There is a glaring sun. A samurai prods the farmers along with his lance; the farmers are tied together and marching, like so many beads on a rosary.*

----Soldiers from the castle suddenly appeared in the village. They bound the people, women and children, too, and led them toward the castle. "Listen once and listen well! These ten are hostages. If the rice for your taxes is not delivered in ten days, you'll never see them again!" "Pa!" "Husband!" The people of the village were led away.

A brilliant sun is shining. **Yoshi** *displays the next picture without narration: The farmers are buried in the earth up to their necks, while a samurai with a spear stands nearby.* **Yoshi** *beats his drum with a slow, monotonous rhythm.*

----"Devils! Devils from hell!"

Yoshi *speaks these words and reveals the next picture. The farmers are looking helplessly on at their friends and families through the bars of the stockade.*

----"They won't last two days!" "But if we give up the rice, we won't survive the winter!"

The fifth picture **Yoshi** *exposes shows the shadows of animals in the moonlight.*

----The sun has finally set, but some unknown creature now approaches the stockade and the buried villagers.

When the picture in front has been whisked aside, the next reveals a wild dog poised for the kill.

----A wild dog. The long famine has left even the dogs starving. He is poised and ready for the kill. "Aaaa!" cry terrified voices, but there is no escape. The wild dog centers his attack on one of the villagers and begins to tear him to bits. Gaaaaa!

The seventh picture shows a farmer at the window of his home trying to maintain control of himself.

----Screaming voices can be heard all the way to the farmers' houses. Friends and relatives find it impossible to stand by in silence.

The eighth picture shows the farmers transporting sacks of rice.

----The next day the farmers' rice was quickly collected. Without millet or other grain to eat this year, many will die during the long winter months. Meanwhile, at

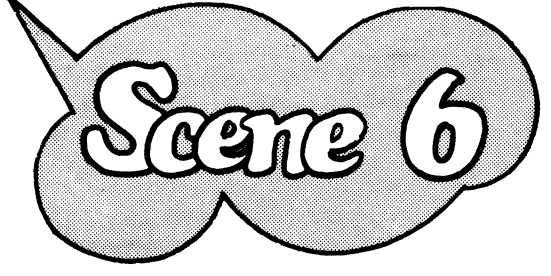
Numata Castle. . . .

The ninth picture shows the castle tower.

----"Ha, ha, ha! Did you see them scurry?" "Don't forget this, Shuzen, this is the way to handle peasants." "Yes, your lordship, I shall not soon forget the strength and wisdom of your policies."

In the tenth picture the farmers are weeping.

----"Damn that Nobunao, damn him to hell!" "This is too much!" Before long the hard winter will visit the farmers. With all their rice stripped from them, how will they survive?



The scene is Ono's *workroom. A few puppets hanging from the walls, two or three pieces of papier-mâché scenery, and a desk will suffice.* Ono *is there with* Saburō *and* Sanae. Sanae *is playing with a ruddy-faced, brown-haired puppet as she talks to* Ono.

Sanae: Yoshi makes an angry face. "Saburō's cheated me. Whoever heard of such a miserable Mozaemon?" I say that it's late and that I'll come again tomorrow, but Yoshi won't stop talking. "My image of Mozaemon is ruined!" he says.

Ono: You must have had a hard time with him.

Sanae: When Yoshi seemed to be running out of steam, I thought to myself, "At last that's over!" But just then, Saburō mumbled, "If there really had been a Mozaemon and O'Gin like you imagine, it would mean they lived without eating." And then everything started up all over again. "But what if he was a truly remarkable man?" Yoshi demanded.

Ono: Really?

Sanae: It was three in the morning by the time I got to bed. Saburō began to work then. Yoshi seems to have gotten up around noon. When I returned from shopping, Saburō was still sleeping. Yoshi had been pasting the pictures of Mozaemon Saburō had drawn the night before to cardboard backings. "If you take kamishibai away from me, there won't be anything left." That's what Yoshi had been saying.

Ono: He returned from the war in 1946, so he's been doing kamishibai for twelve years.

Sanae: I wonder why he doesn't get married?

Ono: He was once. Seems he even had a child, but he doesn't like to talk about it. . . . When he returned to Osaka after the war, he went to his house to find nothing left but the entranceway and the bathroom.

Sanae: Oh. . . . I wonder what he was like when he was young. I'm afraid I can't even begin to imagine.

Saburō: Listen, Makoto. As I watched Yoshi delivering his lines, I began to wonder if he wasn't playing Pop Kawanishi's Mozaemon instead of mine. No matter how much we fight, Yoshi has to perform the plays I draw. But Yoshi does things his own way, and in the end everything comes out the same.

Ono: I understood, though. I could see that your Mozaemon is

completely different from Pop's. I thought it would be interesting to make a comparison between your Mozaemon and the original Crucified Mozaemon. And when I did, this is what I found. I don't remember what year it was exactly in the Kambun period, but the land distribution records from the time have been preserved. According to those records, Mozaemon was in possession of ten percent of the total amount of land included in the survey. But there have been corrections in more than half the entries under Mozaemon's name, which means that he gave up his lands one after another. In other words, Mozaemon himself was in an extremely painful position.

Saburō: Let me have a look at that book!

Ono: Sure.

Saburō: It's a lot of work going through these things, but I've been trying to do a little at a time. I borrowed some books from Pop Kawanishi, too, and found one interesting fact after another.

Sanae: Even so, it's awfully disappointing.

Ono: What is?

Sanae: It means that Mozaemon and O'Gin were eating after all. Listen, couldn't we try it with . . . you know?

Ono: Huh? Oh!

Sanae: Do you mind if I go and get them?

Ono: It's all right with me, I guess.

Sanae *leaves the room.*

Saburō: What's going on?

Ono: Oh, nothing really. You know how we were introduced as Bunraku puppet theatre during our tour? That really bothered me, and on the train back to Tokyo I couldn't get it out of my head until, all of a sudden, it struck me. We'd been doing nothing but Western stories with Western puppets. I suddenly realized how strange it was for us not to do Japanese plays, too. I'd never made a puppet in a kimono before, but. . . . Anyway, one day Sanae insisted that we make a puppet of Mozaemon, and. . .

Sanae *returns with two puppets.*

Sanae: This is Mozaemon--isn't he handsome?--and this is O'Gin.

Saburō: Did you help make them?

Sanae: Well . . . I supervised. I mean, Mr. Ono's even better at sewing kimono than I am. I just said that the nose should be higher and the eyebrows should be thicker . . . things like that. Won't you try them out?

She hands Mozaemon to Ono.

Sanae: "O'Gin, I am going on a journey. Make the necessary preparations"--let's begin from there.

Ono: Pop Kawanishi's version? I've seen it any number of times, but I'm not sure I remember all the lines.

Sanae: All the better. You're good at ad libbing, anyway. "The people of the village sadly return to their homes. Meanwhile, back at Mozaemon's house. . . ."

Sanae *begins on her own, forcing* Ono *to join in.*

Ono: "O'Gin!"

Sanae: "Did you call me?"

Ono: "I have something I want to discuss with you."

Sanae: This part's difficult. "What is it, husband?"

Ono: "I've turned it over and over in my mind, but I cannot reconcile myself to the terrible suffering of the farmers of Tsukiyono."

Sanae: Very good! "I too have given it great thought. The poor harvests of these past few years. The heavy labor taxes to provide wood for the new bridge. The villages overflowing with hungry children. The men's eyes sunk deep into their heads. Ah, I can hear the voiceless cries of the womenfolk!"

Ono: O'Gin certainly talks a lot.

Sanae: "Have you some solution in mind, dear husband?"

Sanae *is lost in the play.* **Saburō** *is smiling broadly as he watches her perform.*

Ono: "Hm. That's just it. No matter how I consider the problem I can only see one way to save the farmers."

Sanae: "Only one way? What might it be?"

Ono *is silent.*

Sanae: "What might it be?"

Ono: "I intend to go to Edo . . . to appeal directly to the Shogun."

Sanae: "A direct appeal?"

Ono: "Yes. O'Gin, do you know of Sakura Sōgorō?"

Sanae: "Yes, there is not a farmer who does not know of Sōgorō."

Ono: "Those who appeal directly to the Shogun never return home again."

Sanae: "Yes. . . ."

Ono: "This may be our last day together."

Sanae *is silent.*

Ono: May your journey be swift and safe.

Sanae: "Husband, may your journey be swift and safe. Do what you can for the farmers of Numata."

Ono: "Then you understand?"

Sanae *does not reply.*

Ono: "Then make the necessary preparations."

Sanae *holds O'Gin as she is and does not move.*

Ono: "O'Gin, make the necessary preparations."

Sanae: "Husband!"

Ono: "What is it?"

Sanae: "I have heard that those who appeal directly to the Shogun are beheaded."

Ono: "My mind is made up. I am prepared for the consequences."

Sanae: "Husband, is there no hope that you will change your mind?"

Ono: "No. A warrior never has second thoughts."

Sanae: "I do not mean to contradict you, dear husband, but we are farmers, not warriors."

Ono: Oh, that's right, isn't it!

Sanae: "Why must you take it upon yourself to go to Edo?"

Ono: "Because I love the farmers of Numata."

Sanae: "More than you love me?"

Ono *pauses for an instant.*

Ono: "I love you too."

Sanae: "Then give up this journey for the farmers and remain here for me."

Ono: "I cannot do that."

Sanae: "Why?"

Ono: "Maybe it's because there are more farmers."

Sanae: "That's no reason. Dear husband, I do not want you to die. You, dear husband, mean more to me than anyone. I will not trade you for all the farmers in Numata."

Ono: That's some way to talk!

Sanae: "I would like to hear your honest reply. Of late you have told me that I am more important to you than anything in the world. Then why do you leave me alone and make your way to Edo? Why do you answer my questions as you do? You . . . I don't care what the real Mozaemon was like."

Ono: "But you are the one who changed the plot."

Sanae: You mean O'Gin really didn't love Mozaemon? I couldn't say "May your journey be swift and safe."

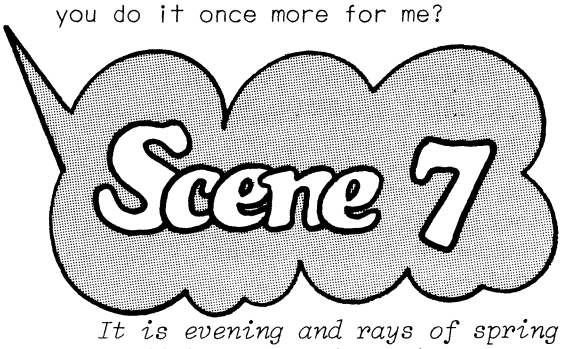
Ono: No, but maybe O'Gin was leading a hard life and was on her husband's back to do something about it.

Sanae: "Don't just sit there, do something!" Like that, you mean?

Ono: I wonder what Yoshi would say?

Sanae: If Yoshi were here we'd be in a terrible argument. "History, history, that's all Saburō thinks about these days. I don't understand the details, but he says we both hate the same enemy. Is that supposed to mean we should fight the Greater East Asia War all over again?"

Saburō: Listen, Makoto, wouldn't you do it once more for me?



It is evening and rays of spring sunlight stream into the room. The room is Saburō's. Sanae *is rehearsing a kamishibai all by herself. The picture shows farmers listening in surprise to the sound of an alarm.*

Sanae: Gong-gong-gong-gong, the warning bell rang. "What could it be?" "Maybe it's a fire." The farmers talked among themselves. Just then a voice cried, "Everybody! Hurry!"

The next picture shows a farmer running.

Sanae: "It's an uprising! A confrontation! The local farmers have gathered under the rebel flag. They want everybody to get together."

The rebelling peasants from another village line up in front of the farmers. Their leader is speaking.

Sanae: "We have risen up to overthrow Nobunao. Men of nearby villages between the ages of fifteen and sixty are to arm themselves with axes and sickles and band together. Those villages that are slow in complying will be razed to the ground."

The next picture is of the

villagers.

Sanae: "It's happened at last. Insurrection! Rebellion! Hurry, everybody, we can't be late!"

Sanae *changes the picture. The next one shows several hundred farmers moving forward behind banners of straw matting.*

Sanae: Thus the rebels brought the surrounding villages quickly into their ranks, and hundreds, thousands marched toward the castle.

A picture of the rebels massing and moving forward.

Sanae: Carrying flags of straw matting at the head of their column, blowing conch-shell trumpets and hooting their battle cries, the rebel forces moved forward. The long repressed rage of the farmers had exploded.

The next picture shows **Matsuzō** *amidst the marchers.*

Sanae: The farmer Matsuzō was to be seen among the rebels. "Tae! Tae! I will avenge you. I will avenge your death so that you can rest in peace!"

The next picture is of the ranks of the rebels spread out across the horizon.

Sanae: The great mass, spread out before the castle, numbered 30,000. "We have risen to avenge the restless souls of the oppressed generations that have gone before us. We go now to meet our deaths and return to dust below the castle." And the forces moved forward to attack.

The last picture is of the castle in flames.

Sanae: Thus it was that Matsuzō the farmer, along with the farmers of one-hundred fifty villages, overthrew the tyrant Nobunao.

Sanae *is about to go through the play once more from the beginning, but she leaves what she is doing and seems to daydream. Then* **Saburō** *comes home.*

Sanae: Saburō? There's a letter here from Yoshi.

She shows the letter on the desk to **Saburō.**

Saburō: Oh. . . .

Sanae: Then he's quit after all. I can't believe it. It was Yoshi who . . . it's just too much! And look at the way he talked about Chō!

Saburō *sits down.*

Sanae: But Yoshi will come back, I'm sure of it. I mean, there couldn't be a Yoshi without kamishibai. In ten days he'll get lonely and come home.

Saburō: No, he's not coming home.

Sanae: Why? It's not just anybody, Saburō, it's Yoshi. He even said so himself: "It's all right with me if I go down with kamishibai. I'm the last soldier." I wonder why?

Saburō: Even Yoshi's got to. . . .

Sanae: Isn't there some way to live without eating?

Saburō: It can't end here. The story doesn't end here. It doesn't work, that's all there is to it.

Sanae: Will you draw some more?

Saburō: I have to.

Sanae: But there's no one left to perform it.

Saburō: I don't care if it gets performed. I just have to draw it.

Sanae: But a kamishibai that nobody sees just isn't a kamishibai. Isn't that right?

Saburō: I don't know. That might very well be the truth. But this "Legend of Matsuzō" is different. It's different.

Sanae *is silent. For a moment neither speaks. Then* Saburō *gets to his feet.*

Saburō: I'm going out for a minute.

Saburō *exits.* Sanae *rearranges the pictures and considers rehearsing but stops and takes a partly completed sweater from under the desk and begins to knit. She rests and is motionless for a few moments. Then* Ono *appears.*

Ono: Isn't Saburō here?

Sanae: Oh, he just went out. Didn't you see him?

Ono: I wanted to ask him to do the set for my new play. Do you think he's too busy to handle it?

Sanae: Makoto, it looks like Yoshi's really quit after all. We got a letter from him today.

Ono: Where is he? What's he doing?

Sanae *shrugs.*

Sanae: The letter was mailed from Osaka.

Ono: I wonder what Saburō will do.

Sanae: Listen, Makoto, would you mind terribly if I didn't help with the next production?

Ono *looks questioningly at* Sanae.

Sanae: Just this one?

Ono: You want to take Yoshi's place, don't you?

Sanae: Yes. For Saburō.

Ono: But, look, kamishibai is done for. All your work will be for nothing.

Sanae: No, I don't think so. Everybody knows that it won't be long before kamishibai goes out of existence. But Saburō says he wants to draw just one more play.

Ono *does not reply.*

Sanae: Won't you let me skip this next production?

Ono: But you're a member of the troupe.

Sanae: There are a lot of people better than I am, but Saburō's got no one. Makoto, the first time I met you you said that freedom's not to be found in books. You said that freedom lies in making choices between things, that you mustn't get too used to what you're doing.

Ono: So? Why do you want to get involved in kamishibai when you know there's no hope for it? As far as kamishibai is concerned you're a rank amateur. Like everything else, kamishibai is a kind of art. Just because you take it into your head to do it doesn't mean you'll be able to.

Sanae: What's wrong with being an amateur? Whether you're an amateur or a seasoned professional, I don't see how the will to do something changes.

Ono: It's not a matter of will. I just wonder how different our work might have been if we had

been able to support ourselves with it.

Sanae: I don't think that I can be as good as Yoshi, but. . . . I've been rehearsing every day since he left. Saburō says that kamishibai isn't women's work, but. . . .

Ono *is silent.*
Saburō *returns home.*

Saburō: Ono, when did you get here?

Ono: A few minutes ago. I guess Yoshi's really. . . .

Saburō: Yes, I don't know what I'll do from now on.

Ono: You mean about someone to take Yoshi's place?

Saburō: No, about Matsuzō.

Ono: He falls in love with someone else and forgets all about Tae.

Saburō: Maybe he's killed by a stray arrow before he reaches the castle. Whatever happens, though, I'm not using what I've drawn. It doesn't make any sense if they win just because I think they do. If we did it as a puppet play, I don't think it would go like that.

All three are silent.

Ono: Look, Saburō, I don't mean to be a pest, but. . . .

Saburō: Puppet plays?

Ono: Actually, we have a chance to have our own television show.

Sanae: Television?

Ono: Yes. When I first heard the offer, I hesitated for a moment. But after I had thought about it, it seemed awfully strange to treat television as if it were an enemy of some kind. So far every demand we've made has been accepted. In the first place the budget's different. Sure television's been producing nothing but junk. But with limits on our time and limits on our finances, how much energy have we been able to pour into our own productions? We only have two choices: we either refuse to work in television and starve to death, or we work in television and keep our productions going. I've chosen to stay alive. You have to be ready to compromise a little. That's what it means to stay alive. We've got to grow up. Right? After all, the real problem is to continue producing good work.

Saburō: You sure know how to talk.

Ono: But in order to do that I need your help.

Saburō *is silent.*

Ono: Are you absolutely set against working in television?

Saburō: It's not that, it's Matsuzō. I just can't leave things as they are.

Ono: I see. . . .

Again there is silence.

Sanae: Hey, it's pitch dark in here.

And she turns on the light.

Sanae: I'd at least like to have a clock. We don't even have a radio, much less a television set. There's no way to tell what time it is. . . . I guess I'll go do the shopping.

Sanae *stands.*

Saburō: All we have is a bicycle we have no use for.

He throws the keys to Sanae.

Ono: Sanae, can you ride a bicycle?

Sanae: Yes, I practiced as hard as I could.

Sanae *leaves.*

Saburō: Makoto, do you think you could have one of your people live here? Yoshi's gone, and . . .

Ono: There isn't enough money for the rent, is that it?

Saburō: There's that, too.

Ono: The lead in our new production I mentioned the other day? I'm giving it to somebody else.

Saburō: Sanae's still not good enough, is she?

Ono: I'll give her another chance, someday.

The room darkens. Blackout.

Scene 8

In the darkness there is the roar of the rebellion. There are the moving shadows of farmers, and one farmer appears.

----We have risen to avenge the restless souls of the oppressed generations that have gone before us. We go now to meet our deaths and return to dust below the castle. Nobunao, prepare to die!

Just then there is the peal of gunfire. The shadowy figures of the rebels fall, and loud, piercing laughter echoes from behind the audience. It is Nobunao's voice.

----Insolent peasants! Do you think you can beat me by banding together? Do you think that your numbers make bamboo spears more effective than our matchlocks? Shuzen, have I impressed you? I've been waiting for this chance to show them just how powerful I am, to give them a taste of my guns!

Laughter echoes on and on. On the stage, using his spear as a crutch, the wounded Matsuzō *appears, struggling to escape.*

Matsuzō: That devil Nobunao! I'm not giving him the pleasure of seeing me dead. Matchlocks, is it? Damn his soul! The time will come! The time will come!

He collapses.

Matsuzō: Tae! I'll avenge you, just wait and see!

Scene 9

Sanae's *face fades in. She is performing the kamishibai.*

Sanae: "Matchlocks, is it? Damn his soul! The time will come! The time will come!" Matsuzō spoke these words and collapsed. "Tae! I'll avenge you, just wait and see!" With his last ounce of strength, Matsuzō pulled himself once more to his feet. But then. . . .

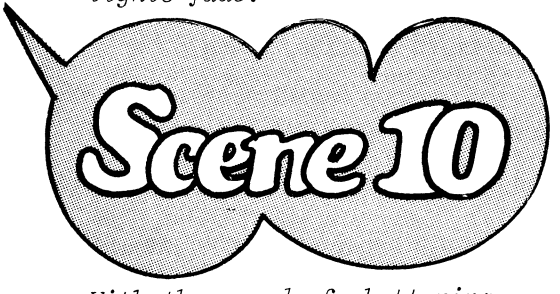
The picture changes, showing Matsuzō *tumbling over a cliff.*

Sanae: "Ah!" cried Matsuzō, but it was too late, for he had already slipped over the precipice.

When the next picture has been revealed, it shows Matsuzō *lying at the foot of the cliff.*

Sanae: With rocks and boulders, Matsuzō tumbled hundreds of feet into the deep valley. Will he live? What will be Matsuzō's fate?

Sanae *beats the drum and the lights fade.*



With the sound of chattering birds, Matsuzō's *face appears. He is lying on a plank-bed spread with straw matting. Rays of morning sunshine pour through the log cabin window. A few moments pass, then* Matsuzō *gives an anguished cry and begins to mumble to himself.*

Matsuzō: Matchlocks . . . matchlocks . . . why am I still . . . where am I . . . where is this?

He gazes around the room. Just then a voice speaks out of nowhere.

----Heh, heh, heh, heh. Come around, have you?

Matsuzō *looks above him. This time the voice is heard from the side.*

----Over here.

Matsuzō *looks in the direction of the voice.*

----Behind you.

The figure of an old man appears behind Matsuzō.

Matsuzō: Who are you? What am I doing here?

----Heh, heh, heh, heh.

Matsuzō: Where am I?

The old man silently points. Presumably there is a window. Matsuzō *rises and looks outside. From behind the audience there are the sounds of ninja practicing--the sound of razor-sharp knives being thrown in rapid succession and the sound of their human target dodging their deadly approach. "Yah!" "Ha!"* Matsuzō *watches with breathless intensity.*

----Doesn't it seem a little funny? Realism's what you're after, isn't it, Saburō?

This voice belongs to Sanae.

Matsuzō: This is it!

Without warning he throws himself at the feet of the old man.

Matsuzō: I beg you, teach me how to fight!

Master: Parents and family?

Matsuzō: I have none.

Master: Wife and children?

Matsuzō *is silent.*

Master: From the look of your wounds, I thought there must be some reason. . . .

Matsuzō: Please, I beg of you, make me your disciple.

Master: The Way is not easy.

Matsuzō: I will do anything. I will stake my life!

Master: All right.

The **Master** *has done something, but our untrained eyes are too slow to catch it. Suddenly a figure hurtles in from above.*

----You called?

Master: Kiheiji, look after him. His name is Fudō.

Matsuzō: My name is. . . .

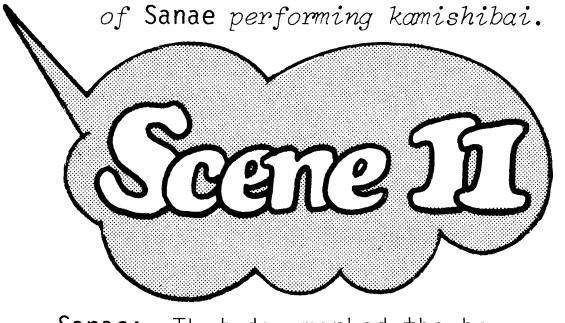
Master: Go!

----Saburō, do you know any of the secret martial arts?

Matsuzō *is kneeling on the ground, listening to the* **Master's** *command. Before he has a chance to move,* **Kiheiji** *kicks him. "Ah!"* **Matsuzō** *cries and falls over.*

Kiheiji: In this place you must never be off your guard.

The surprised **Matsuzō** *gazes at* **Kiheiji**, *but the look on his face has changed to one of determination. The sound of* **Sanae** *performing kamishibai.*



Sanae: That day marked the beginning of Matsuzō's painful journey toward a mastery of the secret martial arts.

When the lights come up we see **Matsuzō** *and the* **Master** *standing before a flax plant.*

Sanae: "The flax is just sprouting. Leap over it." "Over that?" "Yes."

The next picture shows **Matsuzō** *looking at the flax plant, which has now grown over his head.*

Sanae: But the flax grew quickly. In no time it had grown up and up and over Matsuzō's head.

Matsuzō *leaping over the leaves of the flax.*

Sanae: Matsuzō's ability to leap had to grow with the flax. The flax plants grew day after day, and day after day Matsuzō grew, too. And one year passed.

The next picture shows **Matsuzō** *under water, breathing through a slender reed.*

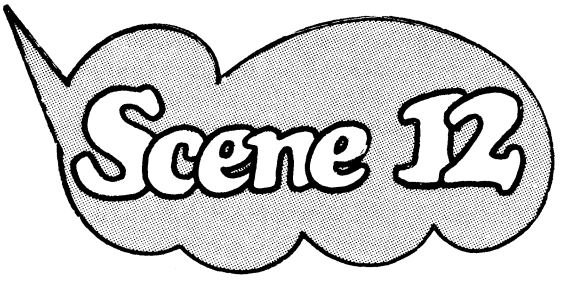
Sanae: But Matsuzō's training had just begun. Two years passed.

The next picture reveals **Matsuzō** *buried in the earth up to his neck.*

Sanae: "Ummmm. The time will come, Nobunao, devil Nobunao!" The weeks and months of two more years flowed by.

Matsuzō *is hanging upside down.*

Sanae: "The time will come! Tae, I'll avenge your death. I'll see your murderer dead!" Repeating these words over and over in his heart, Matsuzō continued to discipline himself. Well, then, how will Matsuzō continue to meet the challenges of his training? And how will he avenge himself against Nobunao?



The scene is Saburō's *room.* Saburō *is talking with* Pop Kawanishi.

Saburō: It didn't have to be rifles. . . . It just doesn't work, that's all, their winning like that.

Kawanishi: You read that book, didn't you? There were lots of peasant uprisings that succeeded.

Saburō: Yes, far more than I had imagined. I had assumed that they all ended in failure. But as I read over the records of the three thousand and more uprisings in the Edo period . . . how can I put it? For instance, "In such and such a place, there was a confrontation on such and such a date. The name of the rebel leader. Number of followers: twenty thousand. Reason: the repressive policies of the lord of the region. Outcome: success." That's what the records show. I had the feeling, though, that the records don't reflect what really happened.

Kawanishi: But look, the reason that book has power today isn't only because of the number of uprisings it records. There's the accuracy of each piece of documentation, as well as the cold, scientific appraisal of each individual incident.

Saburō: There are some uprisings among those that were successful that were cut and dried victories, of course. The conclusion is that victory depends upon the unification of a large number of people. But there are times when people unite and battle the best they can and still lose. Those uprisings are in the majority. But it's not a matter of which were more numerous; the fact that people struggle and are defeated is just closer to the truth as I see it.

Kawanishi: The truth as you see it? It's not that I don't understand what you mean, but do you have to bring the secret martial arts into things?

Saburō: Pop, what I want to draw is not what happened when people stood up and fought, but how they fought, the struggle itself. In other words, the fact that to be a man is to struggle.

Just then there is a voice at the door.

----Is Saburō there?

Saburō: Yes, come in.

Ono *enters.*

Ono: Hi, how are things going?

Kawanishi: Congratulations on your new TV program. You must be pretty busy.

Ono: Yes, I've been meaning to drop by for a talk, but this being our first television work, a lot of things have come up, and. . . .

Kawanishi: I've just had my first chance to see her kamishibai.

Ono: Sanae's?

Kawanishi: Yes, it wasn't bad at all. Better than Yoshi's, I think. I'm surprised you let her go so easily.

Ono: I haven't let her go, not yet. . . . She does have excellent intuition, though. Why, she got

rid of her Akita accent in a week's time. . . . I heard you lost another man.

Kawanishi: Yes. I guess the time has come for me to leave kamishibai too. Luckily Saburō's first comic book has been well received. They say the gags are good. I suppose it comes from the experience of having to please a live audience. I've worked things out to a point where it looks like I'm going to be able to scrape up a living, too. I'm in a good position to leave kamishibai, but Saburō here just won't quit. Our discussions have gone on to the point where we've begun to talk about truth. . . . But wait a minute, Saburō, isn't it a little strange for you to talk about truth at one instant and bring the secret martial arts into your work at the next?

Saburō: They're all based on physical dexterity and are completely scientific. It's not just a gimmick.

Kawanishi: Even so, aren't you pushing things a bit? No matter how hard you work at it, you're not going to be able to jump two meters into the air.

Saburō: I don't think so. It might just as well have been a meter and a half.

Kawanishi: Doesn't bending the truth bother you, though?

Saburō: It really doesn't make any difference. I mean, if you put it that way, there is a certain amount of lying involved in telling any story. You might say it's all right to lie about some things but not about others, but it's not possible to talk without lying. I can be sitting here talking to you. By putting my thoughts into words, half of what I'm thinking comes out lies. Nevertheless we have to talk. . . . Even if some very important things have to be sacrificed, there are more important things to be preserved.

Ono: Saburō, you ought to be more considerate of Sanae.

Saburō: Yes, I'm sorry if having her help me has inconvenienced you.

Ono: Don't worry about me. Look, couldn't you do "The Legend of Matsuzō" in comics? I mean, wouldn't you consider doing it as a sort of picture story?

Kawanishi: That's what I've been saying, too. There have been a lot of comics with plots coming out lately, too.

Saburō: I have tried drawing some.

Ono: Well?

Saburō: They've got more potential than kamishibai. With kamishibai, you've got to keep the pictures down to about ten for each episode, and you can't avoid abbreviating, you can't get away from drawing lies. Especially in the battle scenes, it's almost impossible to show how people fought, and you end up drawing nothing but the outcome. With picture stories, though, it's a lot closer to puppet plays. You can draw things closer to reality.

Ono: For a name, how about "action comics"? Couldn't you tell your story in action comics, Saburō?

Saburō: No. Anything else, yes, but I'll do "The Legend of Matsuzō" in kamishibai.

Ono: Why? You just said that kamishibai has its limits.

Saburō: As a method, yes, but . . . In other words, as far as I'm concerned, Matsuzō is not

unrelated to kamishibai.

Ono: Don't you care about Sanae?

Saburō: Of course.

Ono: She's used up all the money she brought with her, and yesterday she came by, asking if I didn't know of someplace where she might get a job. She said that she's quitting puppetry, too. Is what you're trying to protect as important as all that?

Saburō *does not respond.*

Ono: You say that "The Legend of Matsuzō" is not unrelated to kamishibai, but what about Sanae? Is she unrelated?

Saburō *does not answer.*

Ono: Anyway, think it over. Pop, I'll be stopping by for a talk sometime soon.

Ono *exits. The others are silent.*

Kawanishi: But you've certainly got to hand it to him. What energy! I'll have to follow his example. . . . Anyway, Saburō, you do as much as you can. I don't see anything wrong with that. At the moment I'm in no position to help you any. I can't even tell what I'll be doing a year from now myself. . . . But the times are similar: it was just like this after the war. Everything that you had staked your life on and worked hard to build up suddenly crumbled at your feet. . . . Yes, but people just keep on living somehow. Yoshi's probably doing all right for himself, too.

Saburō *remains silent.*

Kawanishi: Well, I guess I'll be getting myself home. Give my regards to Sanae.

Saburō: Yes, thank you, I will.

Saburō *begins to rise.*

Kawanishi *sees himself to the door.*
For a short time **Saburō** *does nothing. Then he rises and goes to the corner of the room where a pile of kamishibai pictures has been placed. He puts them on his desk and begins to look through them. Then he starts to speak. The first picture shows the Master atop a high bluff with Kiheiji behind him. Matsuzō sits before them.*

Saburō: Ten years flowed by. One day, Matsuzō was called forth by the Master. "You have done well, Fudō. You have completed the first steps of your basic training. Now we'll bring together all the skills you've studied so far." "Yes, Master."

(2) THE THREE MEN ATOP THE CLIFF.

Saburō: "Kiheiji, you go first." "Yes, Master."

(3) KIHEIJI LEAPING FROM THE PRECIPICE.

Saburō *displays the pictures without speaking.*

(4) KIHEIJI BREAKING HIS FALL ON A BRANCH PART WAY DOWN THE GORGE.

(5) KIHEIJI SPRINGING OFF THE BRANCH AND FLINGING DAGGERS IN RAPID SUCCESSION WHILE SAILING THROUGH THE AIR.

(6) KIHEIJI LANDING ONCE AGAIN.

(7) KIHEIJI FLIPPING THROUGH THE AIR.

(8) KIHEIJI FLYING INTO THE BRANCHES OF A TREE.

(9) A NINJA'S LINE AND GRAPNEL WRAPPING AROUND A BRANCH.

(10) KIHEIJI LEAPING.

(11) KIHEIJI RETURNING ONCE AGAIN TO THE TOP OF THE CLIFF.

Saburō: "Well, Fudō, now you try."

Saburō *begins to repeat the series of pictures from "Kiheiji, you go first," but after he has done so he lies back on the floor, clearly dissatisfied. After a few moments sounds are heard in the entranceway, and* Sanae *enters carrying the implements for the kamishibai.*

Sanae: I'm home! Hey, Saburō, listen to this.

Saburō: Huh?

Sanae: Come on, get up. The pictures were a smash! The kids really went for the ninja. They were so excited they hardly breathed! It was fantastic! We're on the right track now, absolutely. Kamishibai is going to make a comeback!

Saburō: Oh. . . .

Sanae: What are you so gloomy about? We've got to fight to bring kamishibai back to life. We've got to make that old Yoshi sorry he quit.

Saburō: Sanae, if you said you wanted to be in the next puppet play, they'd give you a part, wouldn't they?

Sanae: I guess so, but. . . .

Saburō: Then do it. I'm quitting kamishibai.

Sanae: Why? Because Pop Kawanishi's quitting, too? I just met him and we talked. Come on, Saburō, let's keep trying. Please, I'll do anything.

Saburō: That's not it. I just can't draw what I want for kamishibai after all. What I'm really after just doesn't appear. Especially with ninja, so much has to be left out that there's practically nothing left but lies.

Sanae: That's not true. That's the biggest lie of all! You can't fool me, because I know. You said that you were going to do "The Legend of Matsuzō" for kamishibai no matter what. Listen, Saburō, do you want to be just like Yoshi and Chō? Is that good enough for you? Is that all your kamishibai amounts to?

Saburō: Yes, I'm just like Yoshi. There's not a speck of difference between us. I know that. Everybody wants to see a thing through once they've begun it, but they are too weak. No matter how long I practice, I'll probably never be able to leap two meters over a flax stalk. But is that my fault? . . . Maybe so. . . . But look, I don't think Yoshi's forgotten the children for a moment. And I don't think he ever will. And then someday. . . .

Sanae: Someday? Then you're going to quit after all.

Saburō: Yes, this is only the beginning. I've got to get into shape so I won't be beaten again this time. The same goes for you. You've got to go back to Makoto's place and learn all you can.

Sanae *is silent.*

Saburō: Well then. . . .

Saburō *stands and prepares to go to work.*

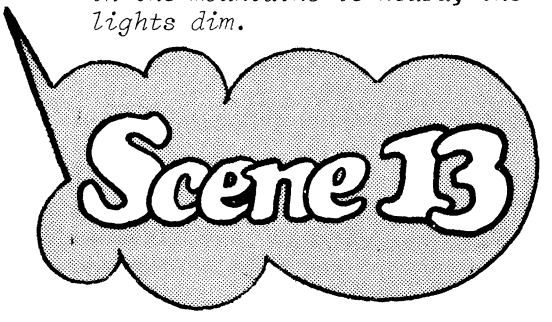
Sanae: Oh, I forgot. Pop gave me this for you. There's money inside. "I have discovered . . . art . . . art is to endure." Art is to endure, that's what he said. He sure is old-fashioned.

Saburō *unwraps the money and*

looks at the letter enclosed with it. Then he sits down at his desk.

Sanae: Saburō? . . .Saburō? . . .

Saburō *is so engrossed he does not seem to hear her.* Sanae *begins to knit her sweater. As the sound of wind blowing through the desolate lands deep in the mountains is heard, the lights dim.*



Slide: TIME FLOWED BY.

The Master *standing atop the imposing cliff.*

Master: Well, has he been making progress or? . . . Go and call him. You have done well, Fudō. You have completed the first steps of your basic training. Now we'll bring together all the skills you've studied so far.

Matsuzō: Yes, Master.

Master: Kiheiji, you go first.

Kiheiji: Yes, Master.

The place is one where huge boulders soar straight up toward the sky.

Master: Watch him closely.

Matsuzō: Yes, Master.

Kiheiji *with breathtaking grace leaps from the rocky precipice, goes rapidly through a series of precision exercises, and returns to his original starting point.*

Master: Well, Fudō, now you try.

Matsuzō: Ye . . . Yes, Master.

Matsuzō's *forehead is beaded with sweat.*

Master: Go! You are to follow Kiheiji's example and return here.

Matsuzō *grits his teeth and leaps from the precipice.*

Matsuzō: Hyaaa! Waaaa! Uuuaaaa!

He crashes into the earth below.

Matsuzō: Ugh. Ummmmm. Errrrr. Uuuuuu.

Kiheiji: He seems to have broken a leg.

Master: It seems the secret martial arts are too much for you to master. Each man is endowed with different gifts. Without them, no degree of effort will suffice to make him what he is not.

Matsuzō: P . . . Please, I beg of you! Give me one more chance!

Master: Fudō, you lack the necessary talent. You would be well advised to reconcile yourself to that fact while you are still able.

Matsuzō: Master!

Master: Look!

And the figure of an executed fellow disciple comes into view.

Matsuzō: Hah!

Master: That turncoat received the sentence dictated by our laws.

Matsuzō: Turncoat. . . .

Master: Of course, his only crime was failing to carry out the mission he had been assigned.

Matsuzō: Then. . . .

Master: Yes, that is the fate that lies in store for those who imperfectly master their art. That is the law under which a ninja must live.

With this the Master *strikes* Matsuzō *unconscious with his staff.*

Master: He is finished. He may be badly wounded, but there is no excuse for failing to parry a blow.

Kiheiji: What is to be done with him?

Master: There is no need to kill him. Leave him in the mountains to die.

Kiheiji: Yes, Master.

Two ninja can be seen running, carrying Matsuzō *between them.*

Kiheiji: This place is as good as any. We have already come five leagues.

Disciple 1: The Master only said to leave him.

Disciple 2: All right, we'll let nature take its course.

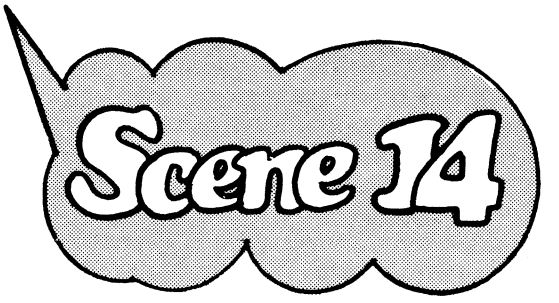
The abandoned Matsuzō *is lying alone on a desolate plateau. When suddenly a single wildcat noiselessly appears. The wildcat slinks toward* Matsuzō.

Matsuzō: Ughhh. Ummmmm.

The wildcat pounces on Matsuzō.

Matsuzō: Ah! My leg, I can't move it! Aa!!!

Other wildcats are attracted by this piercing wail and join in the attack. Just then, a rifle report is heard.



There is the sound of the wind across the barren plateau. Deep in the mountains is a Hunter's *abode. A wildcat pelt is nailed to the door and a matchlock hangs on the wall. The* Hunter, *wrapped in wildcat fur, is grinding herb medicine with a mortar and pestle.* Matsuzō, *his face and extremities swathed in bandages, lies to the side.*

Hunter: All things considered, though, a very lucky man. I hardly thought you'd live. Wildcats are tough, and to make things worse they attack in groups. They're hardly the kind of adversary to be discouraged by a sword. . . . All right, now drink this.

He helps Matsuzō *sit up and pours the medicine into his mouth.*

Hunter: A little bitter, perhaps? Bitter medicine works the best; goes right to where the trouble is. . . . But look at you, all muscle and bone. It's thanks to that body of yours that you survived.

He takes his matchlock from the wall and begins to attend to it.

Hunter: Not a bad little weapon, I should think. You ought to become a hunter. Don't worry, just because you're not the man you were before, you can still be a damn good hunter. That's it, you have to get back at those wildcats.

Matsuzō: Tae, I'll avenge you, the time will come. . . .

Hunter: Well, I'll be going out. We'll have a feast tonight. Once a target's in my sights, I don't give it a second chance.

He points his rifle in Matsuzō's *direction.*

Matsuzō: Don't!

He cries and tries to leap out of range.

Matsuzō: Ah!

His wounds are very painful.

Hunter: It's not loaded. What've you got against matchlocks, anyway? If it hadn't been for this one, you'd have been supper for the wildcats.

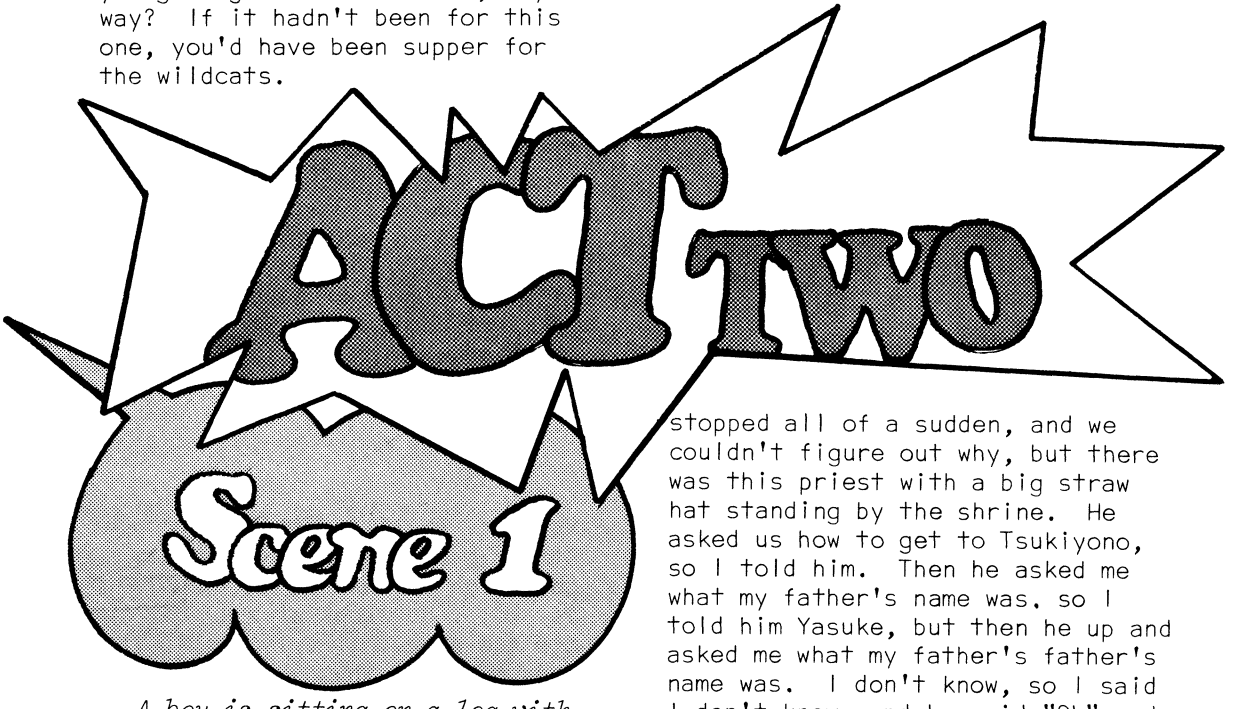
Matsuzō: Saved by a matchlock. . . .

The wailing of wildcats can be heard.

Hunter: Listen to that and take warning. These parts are crawling with wildcats. Especially this year. There are fewer red eyes than usual. The mountain lions are starving.

Matsuzō: Red eyes?

Matsuzō *gets to his feet. He does not seem to notice the pain. And the intermission follows.*



A boy is sitting on a log with a rabbit in his arms. Four farmers are squatting nearby. A Buddhist priest, wearing an enormous straw hat shaped like an inverted bowl and with a crutch at his side, sits behind them. While the boy is talking, the adults appear as silhouettes.

----That day it was good and sunny for the first time in a long while. We were playing on Big Ridge. Ken, who was running way out in front, stopped all of a sudden, and we couldn't figure out why, but there was this priest with a big straw hat standing by the shrine. He asked us how to get to Tsukiyono, so I told him. Then he asked me what my father's name was, so I told him Yasuke, but then he up and asked me what my father's father's name was. I don't know, so I said I don't know, and he said "Oh" and went walking stomp-tap stomp-tap off toward the shrine. That's when we noticed he was lame. Next day, when we went to play, he was all settled down and living in the shrine. It began to rain, so we went into the shrine, and the priest started talking to us. The priest said how there were all kinds of interesting things we didn't know nothing about in faraway places. The ocean, he said, is a big-size pond with big fish to match. I'm

not sure that that talk's not just something he made up. You can't trust what old people say. The day the priest came down into the village was the fifth day. That's how come I knew before my pa and the rest.

----According to what people say, the farmers from a hundred and fifty villages, twenty-thousand people, got together. With their rebel flags unfurled, twenty-thousand surrounded the castle. It must really have been something. There they were, twenty-thousand, with only bamboo spears, but when they charged, the soldiers tucked their tails and ran for the castle. Just think of it!

----But they were beat in the end even so.

----That's right. While us farmers weren't looking, Nobunao bought a pile of matchlocks. With bamboo spears against matchlocks, you haven't got a chance. They say one man in ten died that day.

----Was it scary?

----It's been thirty years since then. I was only three. They say Nobunao was twenty at the time, so. . . .

----He's been evil in his ways since his youth, and on top of that he's got quick eyes for the women, too. Many a tear has been shed for his pleasures.

----Our misery's the same today as always.

----That's the way it adds up, doesn't it. How about it? You've been to a lot of places and seen all sorts of things, is it any different elsewhere? They say way down south there are lords that take the farmers' part and that the farmers there live happily. Is there any truth to it?

Priest: No, that's just talk, that's all it is. Farmers live in misery no matter where you go. With these eyes I've seen villages far worse off than this one.

----In villages like that, what do they do?

Priest: They're existing, I guess . . . existing, for what it's worth to them. Villages everywhere make do with what they have to stay alive. Are you raising sweet potatoes here?

----Sweet potatoes? What's that?

Priest: Haven't they made it this far yet? Don't you know the taste of a sweet potato?

----You can eat them, these sweet potatoes?

Priest: Eat them? Of course. They're not sticky like taro but fluffy. They taste better than millet and chestnuts, and they're more nourishing, too.

----You don't say?

----But the soil's so poor around here, they probably wouldn't grow, anyway.

Priest: Not at all. That's what's good about sweet potatoes, you can raise them even if the soil is bad.

----Are you serious, mister?

----You wouldn't be trying to make fools of us with all your fine talk, would you?

Priest: Ha, ha! What do I have to gain by making fools of you?

----Then you've seen villages where they're farming these potatoes?

Priest: Of course, because if you're farming sweet potatoes, even a cold summer doesn't bother you.

Even if they come and take away all your rice and everything else, you're still all right. You won't starve if you've got sweet potatoes.

The farmers are listening fixedly to the **Priest's** *words.*

Priest: How about it? Will you give them a try?

----We got nothin' to lose.

----If you'd help us, your holiness. . . .

----But these sweet potatoes, you need seeds to grow them, don't you?

Priest: Ha, ha. Are you willing to come with me to Great Ridge to get them?

He picks up his crutch and gets to his feet.

----We'll go with you.

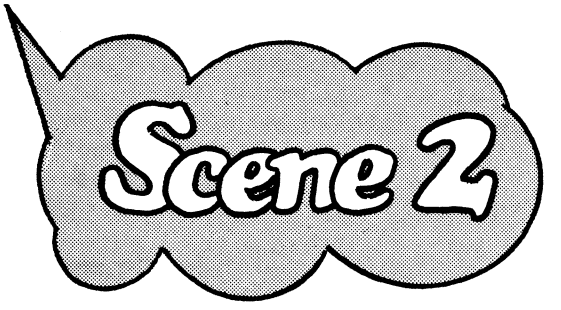
Priest: You'll grow them and share the seeds with the other farmers in Numata, won't you?

----Yes, your holiness.

The farmers follow the **Priest.** **Heita** *remains alone.*

Heita: You got to think about the future, there's no doubt about that, but you also got to think about how to get through the winter, too. My pa's worried about that, he is. You know what I mean, don't you?

He speaks to the rabbit.



The background changes. Two farmers approach.

Yasuke: Heita.

Heita: Oh, Pa, it's you.

Yasuke: Heita, Pa's got to go to his lordship to beg for rice. While I'm gone you stay with Mosuke here. All right, Mosuke? I'm counting on you. . . . If the missus was alive, I wouldn't have to trouble you this way. . . .

Mosuke: Don't give it a second thought. My little Kayo will take good care of Heita. What's more important is that you come back safely.

Yasuke: I will, thanks. Heita, you'll stay with Mosuke and Kayo then.

Heita: No.

Yasuke: What's wrong, I thought you liked Kayo?

Heita: When will you be back?

Yasuke: If his lordship will hear me, I'll be back right away.

Heita: When?

Yasuke: Well, that's a little hard to say, but. . . . I'll be back right away.

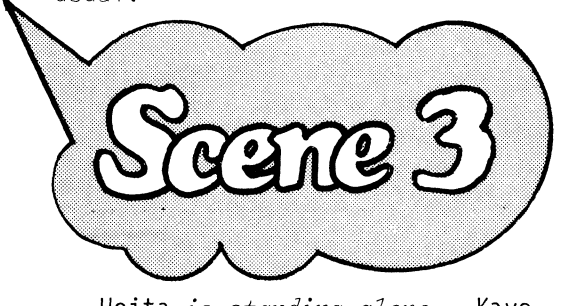
Heita: When Pa looks like that, he's always lying. He looked like that when Ma died, too.

Heita *is alone.*

Heita: Ma came back from working in the fields. She didn't say a word, but just collapsed on the ground. I touched her. Her body was burning with fever. Pa and me put her to bed, but she was groaning the whole night through. The next morning, the old man from Shinmura went into the mountains for some herbs, and he made Ma drink some special tea. That night Ma was quiet. When morning came I went to her, and she smiled. I thought Ma looked awful thin, but when I told Pa, he said she only looked that way because it was inside the house. But the day after that and the day after that Ma got thinner and thinner and her face went grey. Pa said it showed that she was getting better. Then Pa made it so I couldn't see Ma no more. . . . In the morning when I opened my eyes, it was noisy around the house. The girl who had gone to Suzurida to get married was there. Then Pa came in. "Ma's dead," he says. When I went to her, Ma had a sheet of straw matting laid over her. I said I wanted to see her, but they wouldn't let me. I cried and cried and Pa took the matting away. I couldn't believe it was my Ma. But everyone said it was her.

It grows dark.
From behind the audience a voice can be heard along with the strains of a koto.

----What's that? The farmers have come to beg for rice? Hm. This year they're earlier than usual.



Heita *is standing alone.* **Kayo** *enters and joins him.*

Kayo: Heita, if you don't come and eat you'll end up like your Ma.

Heita: Pa's not eating.

Kayo: Your not eating won't make him any happier.

Heita: When will Pa be back?

Kayo: It won't be long now.

Heita: It's been four days already.

Kayo: That's why Mosuke and the others are in council discussing what to do. Look, it won't make any difference what you do. It's his lordship we have to deal with.

Heita: Nobunao. . . .

Just then, **Mosuke** *enters.*

Kayo: Heita won't eat.

Mosuke: Heita! If you don't listen to us we'll tell your Pa.

Heita: What happened in the council?

Mosuke: It isn't easy. There's a lot to be considered. And with everyone so lukewarm on the problems, we don't get anywhere. Anyway, let's eat.

Mosuke *and* **Kayo** *start walking.*

Kayo: Mosuke, don't take any chances. If I lost you, I wouldn't be able to go on.

Heita: Mosuke and Kayo are happier together than Ma and Pa were. They're good people, but sometimes they forget about me. I asked Mosuke about the council after we ate. He said somebody had come from each of eight neighboring villages. Mosuke told them that they'd never make it through the winter and that there was nothing left to do but raise the

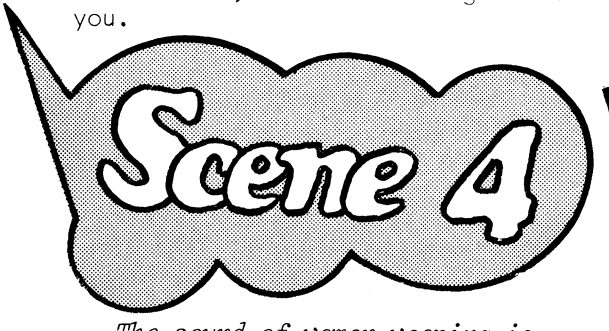
flag of rebellion. Mosuke says only two villages agreed. Mosuke says that the harvest was different for each village. Some are really hard up and others aren't so hard up at that. . . . I was wondering about my pa and got to worrying, but when I had thought the same thing over and over about five times I fell asleep.

It grows dark.

----What? They haven't gone back to their villages yet? Heh, heh, heh, heh! If that's the way they want it, let's see who can wait the longest. Or perhaps it's about time we reminded them of who they are dealing with. The way to keep peasants in their place is to keep them afraid.

This remark is greeted by appreciative laughter.

----Go! No, wait. I will go with you.

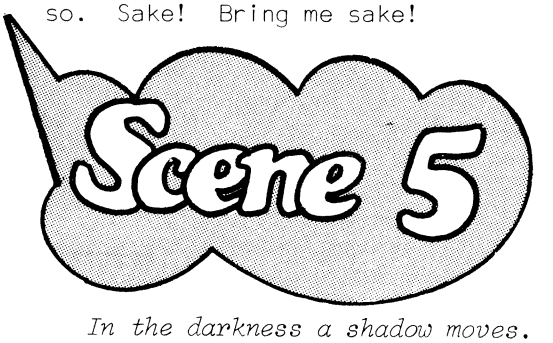


The sound of women weeping is heard as red clouds go drifting past. Two severed heads rest on a platform made of logs, and two women are weeping. A third figure is a man with his head bowed. Wearing his great straw hat, the Priest *is reciting a repetitive Buddhist prayer in a low voice.*

Heita: Pa got it on the seventh day. I couldn't even breathe, but I ran all the way to the river. Everybody had gathered there. Mosuke said that as it was on the riverbed they were probably going to be beheaded, not crucified. With their hands tied behind their backs, Pa and Kanta led the procession. Nobunao was at the very end, on horseback. When the soldiers from the castle put a straw raincoat on Pa, everyone began to shout. They said it was going to be a rain dance. When I asked Mosuke what a rain dance was, he didn't say anything. He just gripped me by the shoulders so hard it hurt. . . . When they brought torches, I understood. . . . I didn't think I'd be able to stand watching, but I just had to. There was the smell of burning straw and then a horrible scream. I thought it was Kanta, so without thinking I opened my eyes, and there was Pa rolling on the ground. Pa was screaming like that and. . . . It's terrible to be weak. Everyone was wailing, but it's our fault for being weak.

It grows dark.
Nobunao's *voice is heard.*

----Ha, ha, ha, ha! That should keep them quiet for six months or so. Sake! Bring me sake!



In the darkness a shadow moves. It is Heita, *slipping through the night, carrying a short sword. He looks up at the castle.*

Heita: Nobunao. . . .

As Heita *puts the sword between his teeth to scale the castle walls, a voice is heard out of the darkness.*

----Heita.

Heita: Who's there?

He takes the sword from between his teeth and crouches in readiness.

----It's me. It's me.

And the Priest *appears.*

Heita: What do you want?

Priest: Are you going to take Nobunao all by yourself?

He gives a choked laugh.

Heita: It's none of your business! Get out of the way!

Priest: It seems you've lost your head.

Heita: Get out of the way! If you don't move I'll get you too!

And he turns his sword on the Priest.

Priest: Heh, heh, heh, heh. You'd better watch where you're pointing that thing.

Heita: I'll show you!

Heita *attacks the* Priest. *The* Priest's *crutch appears to flash through the darkness, and* Heita's *sword is suddenly in the* Priest's *hand.*

Priest: I'll keep this for you.

Heita: Give it back!

Priest: It's a bit early for you to die.

Heita: You don't understand!

Priest: I understand well enough.

Heita: Then give it back!

Priest: I understand and that's why I'm telling you to stop.

He removes his bowl-shaped hat and reveals a face covered with scars and missing one eye.

Priest: Look at this. I was lucky. I've been able to stay alive. I can still take Nobunao.

Heita: Then you. . . .

Priest: That's right . . . I was just like you. That's why I understand.

Heita *is silent.*

Priest: Do you want to kill Nobunao or die like your pa?

Heita: If I can't kill Nobunao, I'd just as soon die.

Priest: You'll have to forget about Nobunao and die then, won't you? You die alive. You wait for the day you can take Nobunao. I've waited thirty years.

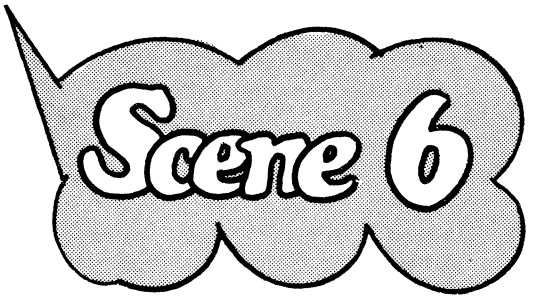
Heita: Thirty years. . . .

Priest: The weak must know how to wait. All right, now come with me. The time will come. Until then you will be patient.

The Priest *slowly walks away.* Heita *is left alone.*

Heita: Is he an enemy or a friend? Either way, he's a strange old man. He says the scars on his face are from being bit by a wildcat. I asked him if it hurt, but he says he doesn't remember. He says he lived in ninja camp, but when I asked him if he's a ninja, then, he said he isn't. Of course not. Who ever heard of a ninja that looked like that? Why my pa's a lot more like a. . . .

Heita *grows silent.*



The scene changes. Kayo *appears behind* Heita.

Kayo: Heita. . . .

Heita *does not answer.*

Kayo: Try not to feel too bad. Mosuke and the others have gone to council.

Heita: A lot of good that will do! They'll only come back and tell us to be patient.

Kayo: Heita, you mustn't hurry things. We have to go step by step.

Heita: Grown-ups all say the same thing.

Kayo: Don't say that. Listen to me, all right? Your pa's dead. Even if we killed Nobunao it wouldn't bring your pa back. Heita? You understand, don't you?

Heita: If Mosuke died, what would you do?

Kayo *does not reply.*
The sound of a horse's whinnying. The sound of the horse approaching. The sound of things being broken. A woman's screaming voice. It grows louder, turns into an inhuman howl, then stops abruptly. Nobunao's laughter fades into the distance.

Mosuke *is embracing* Kayo's *dead body, standing with his back to the audience. Farmers look on.*

----Hor . . . Horrible!

----Why?

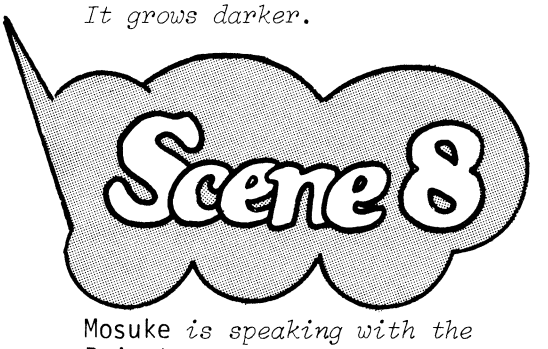
----It's too much!

----I can't bear it no more!

Heita *is standing.*

Heita: They were only out after young women. They stripped Kayo naked right in front of Mosuke's eyes. They got O'Mitsu while she was picking butterburs in Yokoiwa marsh.

It grows darker.



Mosuke *is speaking with the* Priest.

Mosuke: Please, your holiness, won't you help us? We'd be so much stronger with someone like your holiness as our ally.

Priest: No, as you can see, my handicaps wouldn't allow that.

Mosuke: That's not what I mean. What I'm asking for is your help in council. Your holiness might

have some good ideas when things don't go just right, and . . . well, everyone. . . .

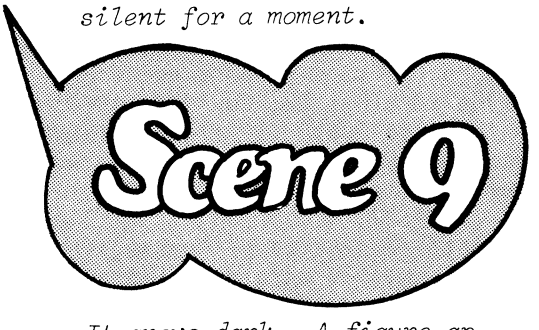
Priest: I appreciate the thought, but, Mosuke, an uprising demands unity. You can't have an uprising unless everyone is united. If an outsider like me got involved, it would only be a source of disunity within the ranks. I know, because I've seen examples by the score.

Mosuke *is silent.*

Priest: Mosuke, you seem to be all worked up over Kayo, but is it worth it? . . . You see what I mean, Mosuke?

Mosuke: Of course I'm worked up. But, your holiness, now all of Numata is worked up. We're not going to fight for Kayo's sake alone, but for Heita's pa, for the farmers of Numata, and for the children who will follow us. . . . We don't think we'll be able to defeat Nobunao just by rising up. But Kayo and the others were murdered. That was Nobunao's challenge to us. We know he intends to force us into the open so that he can wipe out all sources of resistance, but we just can't go on living like this. If the others rise up, I won't have any choice but to join them! . . . Well, please do what you can for those who are left behind. When Heita gets back, tell him we'll meet in the Yatsume forest an hour after midnight.

Mosuke *exits. The* Priest *is silent for a moment.*



It grows dark. A figure appears out of the darkness.

From another direction, another figure appears. The two meet.

----The Yatsume forest.

----Tonight, an hour after midnight.

----Yatsume, right?

The two part swiftly and silently. Three shadowy figures appear in the darkness.

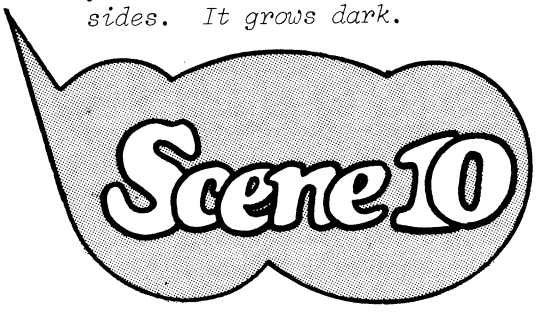
----Yatsume shrine.

----Tonight, an hour after midnight.

Heita: I understand.

----Pass it on to the others.

Voices whispering "The Yatsume forest" can be heard from all sides. It grows dark.



The Priest's *shack.* Heita *comes running in.*

Heita: Your holiness.

Priest: Heita?

Heita: It's an uprising! The hundred and fifty villages of Numata are uniting to overthrow Nobunao. I'm going, too. I'm going with everyone else and avenge my pa. Give me back my sword!

Priest: Then it's tonight?

Heita: You had better hurry and get ready, too.

Priest: No, I'm not going.

Heita: You probably don't have

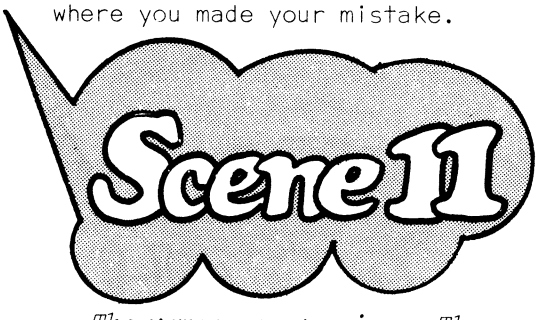
the guts for revenge.

Priest: Not yet. It won't do to hurry things.

Heita: Liar! I'm going!

But as **Heita** *makes for the door, the* **Priest** *grabs him by his collar and gives him a sharp blow on the neck.* **Heita** *loses consciousness and crumbles to the ground. A few moments pass, and then there is a shot, followed by a tremendous volley. The lights dim.*

----Ha, ha, ha, ha! Imbeciles! They feint and you follow like sheep. They killed your women and you let it get to you. That's where you made your mistake.



The women are weeping. They are squatting before a huge mound of dead bodies. Out of the wailing, individual voices can be heard.

----Fool, why did you have to die!

----Yesterday you went into the fields.

----Why, why did this have to happen to us?

----We haven't done anything!

----We haven't done anything! Then why this? . . .

----The gods and the saints have forsaken us!

The **Priest** *appears before them out of nowhere.*

Priest: It is a curse, a fearsome curse.

---- A curse?

----What curse? What law have we broken?

Priest: Look.

The people turn around. Deep upstage a rabbit is caught in a trap.

Priest: It is the curse of Lord Red Eyes. You brutally kill Lord Red Eyes and have him for your meals.

----Why, it's just an ordinary rabbit.

----What's wrong with eating red eyes?

Priest: The very thought! Killing innocent Lord Red Eyes! You say you've done nothing bad, but you have mercilessly slaughtered guiltless Lord Red Eyes. Ah, how horrible! Namu-ami-dabu! Namu-ami-dabu!

----Don't be stupid, old man.

----If we don't eat red eyes, what are we supposed to eat?

----No, maybe it is a curse. His holiness says so, so it must be true.

----Granny, what are you talking about?

Granny: Then why do these things happen to us? We spend our whole lives working. We don't do anything else bad. If it's not the curse of Lord Red Eyes, why do we suffer like this?

Priest: The skies of Numata, the fields, all is cursed by Lord Red Eyes. Rains do not fall, seedlings bear no fruit. Now pray! Those who would wash away their sin,

pray with me! Otherwise there will be no salvation for your sons or for your wives. Come, pray with me. Pray with me before it is too late!

He begins to walk. Granny *and two or three of the others start to follow. One of the men stands in* Granny's *way, kicking and beating a rabbit.*

----It's only a damn rabbit. Look, nothing happens to me. Lord Red Eyes? It's a lot of nonsense!

Granny: What are you doing? Tome!

Priest: Ah, Lord Red Eyes, forgive this poor sinner. Come, my friends, beg the Lord Red Eyes' forgiveness.

Everyone kneels and begins to pray, "Please forgive us!"

Tome: Stop it! This is crazy. Stop it, I said.

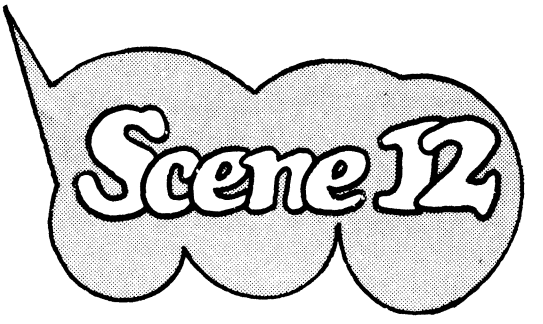
Priest: Come, my congregation, walk and pray. Pray to undo the curse that lies over Numata.

Two or three people follow the Priest.

Tome: Hey, you there! Don't listen to the old fart's nonsense. Lord Red Eyes? That's stupid! . . . Everyone's gone. I can't tell but that I'll be the next one killed. Why did we have to be born as farmers?

It grows dark. Tome's *voice continues for a few moments.*

Tome: Who, who is it? What are you doing? Ah! Aaaaaaa!



The Priest's *voice.*

----Namu-hannyan, kowaneshon, mūdarapiiyaa, nējakaadaa.

The voices of five or six people chorus the Priest, *and it grows light.*
It is morning in the forest. With the Priest *before them, the farmers are praying. Just then,* Heita *comes running into the crowd.*

Heita: Gramps, are you here? Come quick, it's Tome!

Granny: Be quiet!

Heita: Tome's dead!

----Tome?

----What happened?

Heita: I don't know. He was lying down by the river. There's a big ruckus in the village.

Granny: That's what he gets. It's the curse of Lord Red Eyes!

And she raises her voice in prayer.

----We reap what we have sown!

----Your holiness, save us!

Priest: At last you see the truth. Yes, Tome's death is Lord Red Eyes' wrath. It is his exalted witness!

----Your holiness, what should we do?

Granny: Please lead us.

Priest: You will return to your village. You must return and teach the others the true meaning of Tome's death. Tome's death shall not have been in vain!

----That's it, we mustn't let Tome's death be in vain.

----Hurry and tell the others.

Heita *and the* **Priest** *remain.* **Heita** *circles the motionless* **Priest,** *peering at him from different angles.*

Heita: What's wrong? Who's this Lord Red Eyes? Hey! Are you really an old man?

He peeks under the **Priest's** *great hat.*

Heita: It's a real old man. A real old man. Say something! . . . Hey, old man! Why didn't you let me join the uprising? Tell me!

Priest: Where are they now, those who joined the uprising?

Heita *is silent.*

Priest: You have Lord Red Eyes to thank.

Heita: Don't act stupid! Why didn't you let me go? Old man! You, maybe you. . . . That's it, you knew the soldiers from the castle had the place surrounded, didn't you? That's why you. . . .

Priest: Lord Red Eyes told me. Now the poor sinners are coming to mourn their ways. You will pray with them.

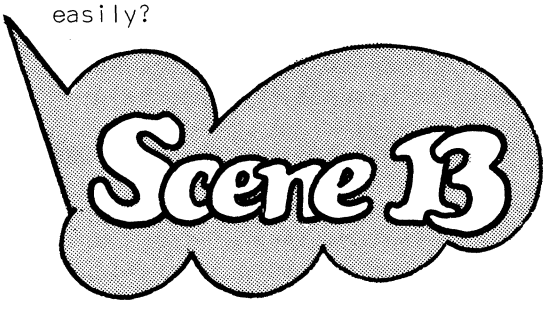
Lo and behold, voices in prayer approach. The voices have increased to twenty or more.

Heita: Not me!

Priest: As you wish. As you wish.

The lights dim leaving only **Heita.** *The voices in prayer grow closer.*

Heita: It . . . it makes me feel funny. Red eyes are cute enough, I guess. I like them better than anything. But this is different. . . . Do people really change so easily?



The **Priest** *is delivering a sermon. His is the only figure visible.*

Priest: You are up before dawn and out in the fields until the sun sets, working your fingers to the bone. Planting in the spring, weeding in the summer, harvesting in the fall, weaving in the winter. You work until you drop. No one is idling. Am I wrong? But no matter how hard you work, one year the sun shines day after day and there is not a drop of rain. Another year the summer is cold. Just as you're thinking the weather will hold this year, swarming locusts ravage your crops. These things defy all reason. Then why must they happen? Have you ever thought about that? Why do you have to suffer like this? It is because the curse of Lord Red Eyes lies over the lands of Numata. In the skies of Tsukiyono, over Great Ridge, in the waters of the Tone, the curse of Lord Red Eyes is everywhere. Then how could there be a rich harvest? Come, brethren, follow me in prayer! Namu-hannyan, kowanenshon, mūdarapiiyaa!

The voices of twenty people chorus the **Priest.**

"Mūdarapiiyaa, nējaka, aada," the refrain is repeated over and over.

Heita: The first day there were only twenty, but the next day the number had doubled to forty, and in a week there were more than a hundred.

The praying voices gradually increase in number.

Heita: It was fascinating. The Red Eyes Religion slowly grew. Two weeks passed and people from the villages nearby began to come, too. They say there are people who travel half a day to pray and then go home again.

Voices join in from all directions. They cease suddenly. The **Priest** *is standing there.*

Priest: The curse of Lord Red Eyes is far deeper than you think. All of Numata is cursed. If in these lands of Numata the blood of Lord Red Eyes should be spilt, the burden of the curse will grow heavier and all your prayers will be for nought. Brethren, you must pass the word to those who sin, still unaware of these teachings. Brethren, you will walk in prayer through the villages of Numata. And you will spread the teachings of Lord Red Eyes throughout the land.

The praying voices continue.

Heita: At first this is what I thought: The folks in Numata were suffering without hope. His holiness figured he had to console them and began the Red Eyes Religion to give the farmers strength. . . . A month ago, there was blood in the eyes of the folks in Numata. But you walk around there now and everyone's smiling. It's disgusting! But lately I've stopped thinking this way. It looks like his holiness really believes that stuff. Otherwise he'd never be able to keep on like this.

Heita *looks around. The figures of five or six rabbits on the ground appear.*

Heita: Red eyes have taken to coming down to the village lately.

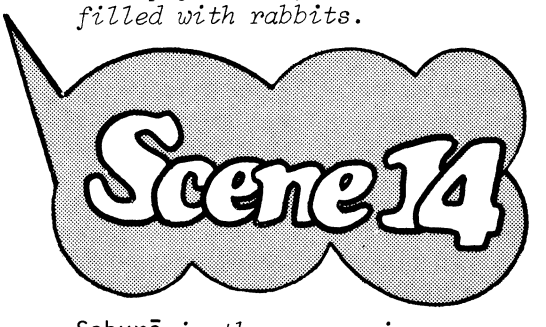
Leaving only the rabbits illuminated, the lights dim. The praying voices move into the distance.

Nobunao's Voice: What is it all about? The curse of red eyes? All right, if that's what they want. Maybe I should listen to that beggar-priest's sermon and go to paradise, too.

The land is covered with rabbits, and it grows dark.

Priest: What? You can't go on living? Then die! Let me ask you just one question. Which will you choose, this short life or the world of eternity? Those who don't want to go to paradise can toil as they always have. But those who don't want to fall to the firey pits of hell can die praying to Lord Red Eyes. Come, those bound for paradise, follow me in prayer! Nam-hannyan, kowanenshon, nējaka, aadaa, mūdara, piiyaa.

The lights dim. The rabbits multiply. Every corner is filled with rabbits.



Saburō *is there, wearing a black turtleneck sweater.*

Saburō: The rabbits increased greatly in number. Now let's take a few minutes from our story to explain a little about natural enemies. Natural enemies are nature's enemies, that is, enemies appointed by nature. Many years ago, wild boars were ravaging the fields on the island of Tsushima, so the people of the island joined together and worked for three years to drive out the wild boars. The next year, however, a terrible thing happened. It goes without saying that people could no longer enjoy wild boar stew, but far worse, the island was overrun by vipers. In other words, when the wild boars, the vipers' natural enemy, disappeared from the island, the vipers began to multiply rapidly. Here's another example. In 1886, an Englishman named Charles Whitman took two pair of rabbits to Australia. As you know, Australia is the country of kangaroos, and there are no meat-eating animals. The two pair of rabbits multiplied, and in two years there were rabbits everywhere. But the rabbits had one natural enemy in Australia, too. It was man. In ten years Australia became the world's leading exporter of rabbit fur. Well, then, let's return to the Priest and the Red Eyes Religion. *(Slides appear.)* Freed by the Red Eyes Religion from one of their natural enemies, man, the rabbits rapidly multiplied. It was only natural that others of the rabbits natural enemies, the wolf, fox, and badger, should have multiplied, too. But most marked of all was the increase in the number of wildcats, who depend primarily upon rabbits for their food. The ability of rabbits to multiply far exceeded the appetite of their natural enemies, especially the wildcats. But in this mountain forest, where at first glance nothing seemed out of

Slides:

(1) A CRAGGY MOUNTAIN.

(2) RABBITS EATING GRASS IN THE SHADOW OF A TREE.

(3) A WILDCAT READY TO POUNCE ON THE RABBITS.

(4) THE POUNCING WILDCAT.

(5) THE WILDCAT WITH HIS PREY.

(6) THE BONES OF DEVOURED RABBITS.

(7) A WILDCAT STALKING RABBITS FROM A CLIFF.

(8) THE WILDCAT LEAPING FROM THE CLIFF.

(9) THE WILDCAT WITH A RABBIT IN HIS MOUTH.

(10) THE WILDCAT EATING THE RABBIT ATOP THE CLIFF. IN THE FIELD BELOW, A MAN AND WIFE ARE WORKING.

(11) IN A MOUNTAIN FOREST.

(12) THE BASE OF A GREAT TREE.

(13) GRASS.

(14) A GROUP OF RABBITS CLUSTERED ABOUT A GREAT FALLEN TREE.

(15) RABBITS CHEWING THE BASE OF A GREAT TREE.

(16) RABBITS CRAWLING INTO THE

place, a terrible thing was happening. Food for the wildly multiplying rabbits was gradually growing scarce. With the growing scarcity of food, the rabbits began to eat things not usually included in their diet. As a result, an epidemic began to sweep through their numbers, and many rabbits died. Now, with the rabbits dying off, the meat-eating animals, particularly the wildcats, who had come to depend upon rabbits for their meals, began to feel sharply the scarcity of food.

BRANCHES AND EATING THE LEAVES OF THE GREAT FALLEN TREE.

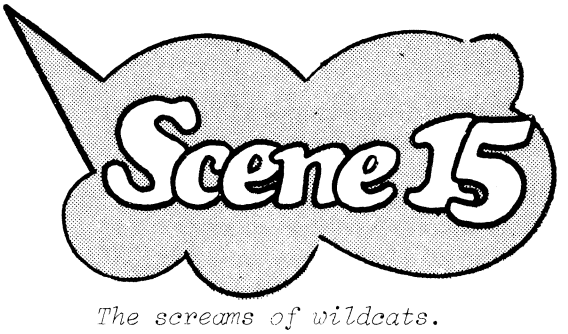
(17) RABBITS DYING IN DROVES.

(18) A PACK OF WOLVES HUNTING.

(19) THE SILHOUETTE OF A LEAPING WILDCAT.

(20) A WILDCAT IN A TREETOP WITH THE MOON AT HIS BACK.

(21) WILDCATS GROUPING ON A CLIFF.



The screams of wildcats. The Priest *enters. He finds the remains of a dead rabbit, picks it up and examines it. Then he flings the remains into the undergrowth to the side.* Heita *comes running in.*

Heita: Your holiness.

Priest: How are things going with the neighboring villages?

Heita: The Red Eyes Religion has spread completely into the villages to the west and to the north.

Priest: Good, very good. Lord Red Eyes will be pleased.

Heita *finds the remains of the rabbit.*

Heita: Ah! Lord Red Eyes is . . . .

He rushes to the corpse and finds another.

Heita: Here too!

Priest: Look, over there, as well.

Heita: What shall we do?

Priest: At this rate, Lord Red Eyes will disappear before long.

Heita: All the Lord Red Eyes are going to die?

Priest: Yes. And that's the end of the Red Eyes Religion, too. . . Heh, heh, heh, heh, the time's come at last. . . . It won't be long now, Heita.

The growling of a wildcat can be heard close at hand. The Priest *takes* Heita *by the hand.*

Priest: Heita, come!

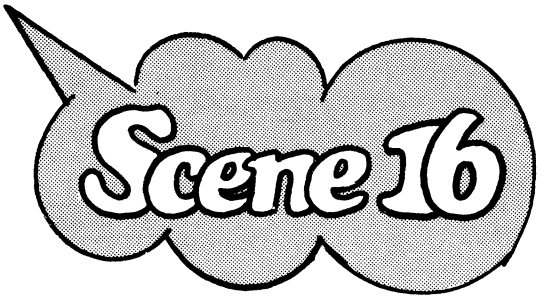
Heita *is alone.*

Heita: Lord Red Eyes died one after the other, but Lord Man died, too, day after day. It may sound strange, but the Red Eyes Religion

grew more and more popular even without red eyes.

Suddenly there is a secretive tone to his voice.

Heita: There's something stranger than that, though. Yesterday, in one of the neighboring villages, a man died without kith nor kin. His holiness said he'd take care of the body and had it carried away. When night fell, he made me help him, and we dragged the body up into the mountains. "What do we have to do this for?" I asked, and he said, "To memorialize his death."



The **Priest** *is sitting before an earthen pot. Then* **Heita** *dashes in.*

Heita: Your holiness, come quick.

Priest: What is it?

Heita: The man from yesterday, you know, from the next village. . . .

Priest: Heita, did you go into the mountains alone? Idiot, you'll get yourself eaten alive by the wildcats.

Heita: But. . . . There's nothing left but bones. The wildcats, the wildcats ate him up, ate human flesh!

Priest: He was already dead anyway. It didn't hurt him any. . . . Well, that should do it.

Heita: Will wildcats even eat human beings?

Priest: If they're hungry enough. If you teach them what something tastes like they'll eat anything. They don't care if it's human.

Heita *is silent.*

Priest: All right, come and eat this. You must be hungry.

Heita: Um.

The **Priest** *dishes out some of the contents of the pot for* **Heita.** **Heita** *devours it ravenously.*

Priest: How is it, good?

Heita: Um, what is it?

Priest: Rabbit, I found a good fat one.

Heita: Lord Red Eyes?

Priest: There's nothing left to eat but rabbit.

Just then voices cry, "They got Kansuke!" "The wildcats got Kansuke!" "They got him while he was working in the fields!"

Priest: It looks like it's begun.

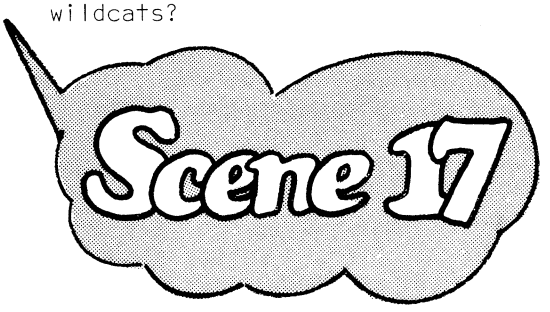
The lights dim. The growling voices of wildcats are to be heard.

Nobunao's Voice: What's that? The Princess? By Wildcats? You were with her highness to view the fall leaves! Idiot! Send out a punitive force immediately! Mmmmm, kill every wildcat in the land!

Heita *comes into view.*

Heita: Yesterday three people in Niimaki and two in Tsukiyono; today two families were wiped out in Shimo-Iwata. At this rate, we won't be able to go into the fields to work. They say the punitive force Nobunao sent out never came

back again, and we are unarmed. What hope do we have against the wildcats?



A great crowd of farmers can be seen prostrating themselves on the ground.

Nobunao's Voice: Who are those people? . . . Farmers? All right, they know what to expect when they get out of hand. Bring out the rifles. Annihilate them! Away! Get them away from here! No, wait! We shall use them. They are many, and they know the countryside better than we do. And it will cut down the number of mouths we have to feed.

The farmers look up.

----Please!

----Please save us!

----We're so frightened, we can't go into the fields.

Shuzen's Voice: Heh, heh, heh, heh, what's happened to Lord Red Eyes? Won't he save you? Old man, what about you?

Priest: Yes, my lord. Things have come to such a pass, we have no alternative but to beg his lordship's exalted aid.

----More than a hundred farmers have already been killed by the wildcats.

----Please, please help us!

Shuzen's Voice: Idiots! You will solve your problems yourselves. You can't depend on his lordship for everything!

----But . . . but there's so many of them!

Shuzen's Voice: A soldier's duty is to protect the country. We can't be bothered with the likes of a wildcat hunt. Are you willing to get rid of them yourselves?

Priest: Yes, yes we are. We're willing, but, as you see, we haven't the means. . . .

Shuzen's Voice: His lordship always has his people's welfare in mind. He has instructed me that if you are willing he will grant his aid.

----Bless his lordship's goodness!

Priest: His lordship's beneficence is always our comfort and support.

----But how?

Voice: We will show you. Bring them out.

There is the rattle of carts being drawn out.

Voice: Two hundred spears, one hundred rifles. Go ahead, take them!

----! . . . I'm afraid!

----Is this a matchlock?

Priest: We are grateful, but we don't know how to use these weapons.

----It scares me just to look at them.

Voice: We will teach you. Take one apiece. First you put the powder in like this, then this is the ball . . . push it in good and hard, and light the match. Now aim like this and pull the trigger.

There is a bang as one shot

is fired.

----Did you see that?

----It's fantastic!

Voice: This time you try it. First put in the powder. Be careful! One mistake and you'll blow yourselves to bits.

----I'm scared.

----This'll do it, I guess.

Voice: You on the right, stop shaking! Next you put in the ball, then aim and pull the trigger.

All of a sudden, **Saburō** *is standing there.*
And all of a sudden the gun barrels are pointing at the audience.

Voice: Idiots! Not this way! In the other direction!

Voice: What . . . what are you doing!

Voice: Stop . . . stop it! You're going to kill. . . .

With a violent roar, the matchlocks are fired into the audience. The farmers marvel at what they have done.

----What . . . what shall we do?

----This, this is terrible!

----I'm scared!

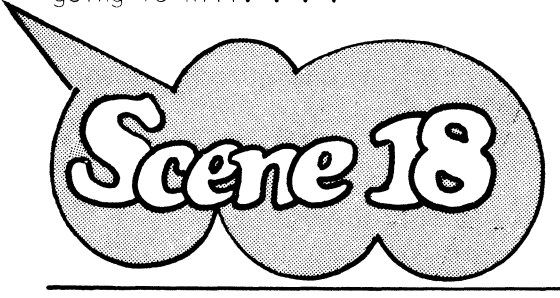
----Now we've done it.

Just then the **Priest** *enters.*

Priest: There's nothing to be afraid of, we have matchlocks! Hurry up and reload, otherwise we'll be blown to pieces. You men pull that wagon. Heita, run and tell the other villages!

Heita: Yes, sir!

The grating sound of carts being pulled away continues, and, with the sound of fleeting horses' hoofs, the lights grow dim.



The **Priest** *appears.*

Priest: Come, face the castle! Ready, fire!

The sound of gunfire.

Slides are shown.

(1) HEITA ON A GALLOPING HORSE.

(2) HEITA TELLING THE VILLAGERS THE NEWS FROM HIS HORSE.

(3) FARMERS POISED AT THE READY.

(4) FIRE SPITTING FROM THEIR RIFLES.

(5) FARMERS ARMED WITH SPEARS.

Priest: Forward! Forward! Bring down the castle! Lord Red Eyes will give us strength! Die fighting and you're bound for paradise! Now is the time! Avenge the generations of your forefathers!

Shuzen's Voice: Your, your lordship, the farmers! . . .

Nobunao's Voice: Idiot! Wipe them out with one blow! They're only farmers, wipe them out! Grind them into the earth!

Priest: Forward! Show no mercy! Burn the castle! Slaughter the warriors. Leave not one of them alive! Avenge yourselves! Satisfy your rage! The people of Great Ridge, the people of Shinmura, of Shiroiwa, of Tsukiyono, now is the time to show them the strength of the farmers of Numata!

Blackout.

(6) MANY FARMERS RUNNING.

(7) NUMBERS INCREASING.

(8) THE REBELS TURNING ON THE CASTLE.

(9) THE CHARGING FARMERS.

(10) TREE TRUNKS BREAKING DOWN THE CASTLE GATE.

(11) WARRIORS ON HORSEBACK.

(12) FARMER RIFLEMEN FIRING ON THEM.

(13) WARRIORS SHOT FROM THEIR HORSES.

(14) FIRE BEING SET TO THE CASTLE.

(15) THE BODIES OF DEAD SAMURAI.

(16) THE CASTLE GOING UP IN FLAMES.

ACT THREE

Scene 1

A telephone rings through the noise of a radio tuned to a program of pop music. A voice answers. There are two desks in the room. Sanae *is busy working at one, while at the other desk a young man tediously puffs on a cigarette, occasionally pouring himself cups of tea. These two, however, are silent, and it seems that the noise emanates from the next room. A young girl enters.*

----Excuse me, but here are the proofs for *Picture Week*.

Sanae: All right, thank you.

----They want them back by eleven tomorrow morning. And what shall I do about the other publisher, Kōbunsha?

Sanae: I forgot what they wanted.

----It was about the fee for reprinting. Shall I ask Nagata to go instead?

Sanae: No, I'll go. I'll drop

by the *Picture Week* offices, too, on my way.

----But then there's Hakubundō Press. . . .

Sanae: Have they come around again?

----Yes, they want to know if there isn't some way to keep the story going for another year.

Sanae: No, absolutely not. Saburō's not drawing at their beck and call. . . .

She addresses **Kageyama.**

Sanae: Do you remember the first time they came? They wanted us to end the story after one more installment. "I can't go back to the office until I have your answer," was what the guy said.

Kageyama: Those were hard times for everybody. . . . But, in any event. . . .

Sanae: In any event call Mr. Kodama on the phone and tell him I'll be by tomorrow. . . . Either way, Hakubundō's out. We'll have to switch to some other publisher. Oh, it's already five. You'd better be getting home early. In a couple of days we're going to get busy again, and you won't be able to afford such luxuries.

----Yes ma'am.

The girl exits. **Sanae** *makes a series of notes in her notebook.*

Sanae: I'm sorry, I'm sure he'll be home soon.

Kageyama: That's all right. . . . But you certainly are busy! I'm impressed every time I come here. You work every day, morning to night, but never show signs of tiring.

Sanae: This is nothing compared to the old days. Kamishibai went out and we weren't able to pay our rent. We were thrown out. . . And rent was only ¥800 a month then, too.

Kageyama: It's hard to imagine.

Sanae: If you were really hard up, you'd do the same thing, don't worry. . . . That's right, that was when I started going around, trying to get publishers interested in Saburō's work. I didn't even have enough money for carfare, so I walked all the way to Takadanobaba. There were still lots of trees left then. It was fun.

Kageyama: I envy you. I can't stick to anything. Everything seems so pointless. I start something that looks good, seem about to lose myself in it, but then see through the charades I'm playing and give up. I'm left without any purpose. Of course, purposelessness used to be a perfectly respectable occupation, but it's just another pose. We were children who dreamed of becoming great criminals but now suddenly want nothing better than to numb ourselves. There just doesn't seem to be any point to caring. . . . In Russia around the turn of the century, there were a handful of nihilistic intellectuals and the mass of ignorant peasants. In Japan today there are a handful of optimists and the mass of nihilistic citizens. . . . They look innocent, but they know. You can bet on that.

Sanae *is silent.* **Kageyama** *looks at her. She has been looking over some proofs.*

Kageyama: And on top of that I talk too much.

He watches **Sanae** *working for a few moments.*

Sanae: Do you have a dream?

Kageyama: A dream? . . . I'm sitting in my cozy bungalow, looking out at the flowers in my garden in the Sunday morning sunlight and drinking the tea with milk my wholesome wife has poured for me. I'm reading a newspaper article about a young man who died. I begin to think that he must have been out of his mind and decide to do some exercises. . . .

Sanae: Exercises?

Kageyama: But it certainly is wonderful, achieving your dreams as you have.

Sanae: As I have? Don't be silly. This is reality, and it's tough.

Kageyama: But what about Mr. Kuroda's dream? If you hadn't been with him, his work would never have been possible.

Sanae *laughs gently.*

Sanae: Yes, a lot of people abandoned him. I was the only one who stayed. . . . But one thing is clear: He's the kind of man who would have gone his own way even if no one had stood by him. I've finally begun to understand. There's a terrible force driving him. I don't really know how to describe it. . . . It's a kind of vengeance.

Kageyama: Vengeance? Vengeance against what?

Sanae: It is difficult to understand. Revenge has gone out of fashion in this age of peace.

Kageyama: I suppose. . . .

Sanae *once again begins to work.*

Kageyama: Peace . . . Japan . . . peaceful Japan. Mr. Kuroda mentioned that he might do some modern stories. What happened to that idea?

Sanae *is lost in her work. A popular song can be heard on the radio in the next room.*

Kageyama: Well, I'll be getting myself home, I guess. I'm just in your way.

Sanae: Are you leaving already? Didn't you have something to discuss with Saburō?

Kageyama: Yes, but. . . . Would you give him the message? Actually, we're planning to publish a series of comic books to be sold at regular bookstores, and we'd like Saburō to do one action comic for us.

Sanae: I'd be glad to give Saburō the message, but I really don't think there's much chance at the moment that he'll accept.

Kageyama: Yes, I know how busy Mr. Kuroda is, but when I told our editor that there wasn't much hope, he said that we might start with *Red Eyes*. Would you ask Mr. Kuroda?

Sanae: Yes, I'll ask him.

Kageyama: Thanks. Other firms are planning similar projects, but, well, we've worked together for a long time, and. . . . I really do appreciate how busy you are, but we're in something of a hurry. It would have been best if I could have had Mr. Kuroda's answer today, but I'll call again in the morning. Well, then, . . .

Sanae: I won't see you to the door.

Kageyama: That's all right, I know my way.

Kageyama *exits.* Sanae *works for a few moments, then stops to stretch. She sits gazing into space. It is growing dark. The office girl enters.*

----A Mr. Ono is here.

Sanae: Ono? . . . Makoto! Come in! When did you get back?

She gets to her feet.

Ono: You're as energetic as ever, aren't you, Sanae?

Sanae: I'll bet you had a hard time. How did it go?

Ono: The food was delicious and the scenery was beautiful. I'll go to Shikoku anytime. The young ones even got in some swimming.

Sanae: But how did it go?

Ono: Terrific. In Takamatsu, a laborer traveled from a lumber yard twelve miles away just to see us perform. After the show he came around to our dressing rooms. "You've given me the will to go on living," he said. As we saw off the last bus of spectators, we were really glad we'd come. With one one-night stand after the other, we were pretty exhausted, but we forgot how tired we were. There was a girl who'd gone all the way home and brought us some sweetcorn; and others who said they wanted to help carry our flats all the way to the bus.

Sanae: Touring. . . . Where are you going next?

Ono: Our next tour's really going to be rough. Tohoku and Hokkaido from November through January. I considered refusing the offer, but, you know how it is, you're always so glad you've come the cold weather doesn't bother you. We're thinking of hitting those places where there may only be an audience of 50 or 100 this time. We'd like to go where no other troupe's ever gone before.

Sanae: Makoto?

Ono: Yes?

Sanae *does not respond.*

Ono: What is it?

Sanae: Are you hungry?

Ono: No, I ate on the way over here. How's Saburō?

Sanae: Today he said he had to meet someone and went out after lunch. He hasn't changed a bit. . . I just can't understand what he's thinking.

Ono: He spends too much time closed up by himself. He's losing touch. Why don't you tell him how you feel?

Sanae: That's just the point. I try to tell him, but when the time comes I end up saying all kinds of foolish things. . . .

Just then the door opens, interrupting **Sanae.**

Sanae: He's back at last. You're late. Mr. Kageyama's left already.

Saburō *enters.*

Saburō: Makoto! When did you get back?

Ono: Arrived this morning.

Saburō: You're looking well.

Ono: Oh, I meant to tell you, I met Pop Kawanishi in Osaka. And then I saw Yoshi.

Sanae: You met Yoshi? Where is he? What's he doing?

Ono: He says he's in the candy business with a friend from his war days in Manchuria.

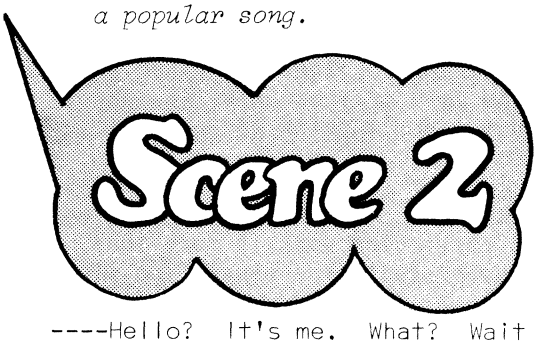
Sanae: Is he just selling gumdrops and licorice and living with his

war buddy?

Ono: No, he's gotten married.

Sanae: Really? Yoshi's married?

The room grows dark, and a woman's voice is heard through a popular song.



----Hello? It's me. What? Wait a minute.

----She seems to be a real beauty. Pop says she's too good for Yoshi.

----The television's on so loud I can't hear a thing.

----Well, maybe Yoshi's settled down for good.

Apparently the television has been switched off, for the noise stops abruptly as the telephone voice continues. The lights come up, but there is no one in the room.

----Hello? Yes, all right. I'll have the bath ready. What would you like for dinner? What? Mushrooms? All right. Yes. Yes. What?

Just then the doorbell rings.

----Oh, there's someone at the door. It must be the man from the insurance company. Yes, all right. I'll be waiting.

The doorbell rings again.

----I'm coming!

The voice fades and, after a few moments, is heard again.

----He just called and said he'd be right home. Won't you come in?

Two men enter, guided by a woman. One of them is Pop Kawanishi, *and the other is a younger man. They are offered cushions to sit on.*

----Would you be friends from the company?

Kawanishi: No, I'm an older acquaintance. . . .

----From the days in Manchuria?

Kawanishi: No, from Tokyo.

----No! Then you must be Mr. Kuroda!

Kawanishi: No, I've come to discuss Mr. Kuroda, but my name is Kawanishi.

And with this, the name card he has been proffering for some time finds itself before the woman.

----No! Then you're Pop Kawanishi! I understand you've been very kind to my husband over the years. I do appreciate everything you've done.

Kawanishi: Then I am correct in assuming that you are the lady of the house?

Yoshi's Wife: Yes. I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance.

Kawanishi: Yoshi . . . I mean, Mr. Yoshimura is a very lucky man.

Yoshi's Wife: Have you come all the way from Tokyo just to? . . .

Kawanishi: Yes, I was in Osaka on business when I happened to meet this gentleman, Mr. Taguchi of *Popular Sunday Magazine*.

Taguchi: How do you do? Actually I had a few questions I wanted

to ask your husband about Mr. Kuroda.

Yoshi's Wife: Is that right? My husband has spoken a great deal of Mr. Kuroda.

Kawanishi: I'm sorry to barge in on you like this, but I will be returning to Tokyo this evening, so. . . .

Yoshi's Wife: Not at all, why, I'm sure my husband will be glad to see you. As a matter of fact, he just called to say he's on his way home from the station. He's just returning from Tokyo. Isn't that a coincidence? Will you excuse me for a moment?

She exits.

Kawanishi: Is that Yoshi's wife?

Taguchi: She's quite lovely, isn't she?

Kawanishi: I should say.

His eyes roam around the room.

Taguchi: But this hasn't helped my story any. It looks like I'm going to have to forget about the old candy dealer and his reminiscences of the man behind the hero's mask.

Kawanishi: Taguchi, you really must stop trying to force people into those categories of yours. There is some question about how well Yoshi understood our kamishibai movement, of course. But there were several hundred kamishibai artists in Tokyo at the time, and Yoshi was second to none. It was because Yoshi was with us that we were able to continue performing kamishibai while all the other groups failed. I for one think that this power of the masses should be more highly appraised. In other words, there should be a reevaluation of the artist who actually went out, all by himself, and dealt directly with the crowd. . . Saburō was always upset because he said Yoshi got too emotionally involved, but. . . .

Taguchi: Is that so?

Kawanishi: I think it would be fair to say that Saburō would not be the man he is today had it not been for the age of kamishibai. The work of those days was hard, but I don't think it was for nothing.

Taguchi: Are you suggesting that a particular work is more than the product of a single individual?

Taguchi *has begun taking notes.* **Yoshi's Wife** *enters with tea and sweets.*

Yoshi's Wife: I'm terribly sorry to keep you waiting like this. I'm sure he'll be home any minute now.

Kawanishi: Not at all.

Taguchi: Does your husband miss kamishibai?

Yoshi's Wife: I really couldn't say--he talks so little about the past--but he has all of Mr. Kuroda's comic books.

Taguchi: Really! How does he feel, reading them?

Yoshi's Wife: Well, we have no children, you see, and comic books are . . .

The doorbell rings.

Yoshi's Wife: That must be him now.

She exits.

Taguchi: At last the modern Matsuzō makes his entrance.

Kawanishi: You had better not make references like that. He's

probably sensitive to reminders that he quit kamishibai.

Yoshi *has still not appeared.*

Kawanishi: I wonder what he's doing?

For a moment there is silence. Then **Yoshi** *enters. Perhaps he was changing, for he appears in Japanese-style clothes. He cuts a distinguished figure.*

Yoshi: I'm sorry to have kept you waiting so long.

Kawanishi: Yoshi, it's been a long time.

Yoshi: I'm sorry I haven't stayed more closely in touch.

Kawanishi: Not at all. I should have written or called myself. Oh, by the way, this is . . .

Taguchi: My name is Taguchi, from *Popular Sunday Magazine*.

Yoshi: How do you do? I'm Yoshimura Yoshikazu.

Kawanishi: How are things going?

Yoshi: Rather well, thanks. We incorporated last year. By the end of next year the new factory should be completed. You're looking well, too. I noticed your book at the store recently.

Kawanishi: I'll bet you haven't seen Saburō.

Yoshi: No, I haven't. I wonder what he's up to. He's certainly made a name for himself in these parts. His books are in great demand among the young workers at the factory, I can tell you that.

Kawanishi: He spends all his time in the house, working like a madman. Sanae takes care of most of the work outside.

Yoshi: Sanae?

Kawanishi: Didn't you know? They got married.

Yoshi: Saburō and Sanae?

Kawanishi: I acted as the best man. Their friends contributed a couple of hundred yen apiece, and we had a little tea party to celebrate.

Yoshi: And what about Mr. Ono?

Kawanishi: That's a long story. . . And Taguchi here's going to write down everything we say, so . . . let's just say he's a good friend. He's a real operator, too. He made a lot of money in television and all of a sudden built his own rehearsal rooms.

Yoshi: Television? He always was the kind to go right out and get what he wanted, wasn't he? . . . But I still don't understand about Saburō and Sanae.

Kawanishi: You're in no position to talk, Yoshi.

Yoshi: Ha, ha, I suppose you're right. Around the end of last year it became pretty clear that my being a bachelor wasn't good for business, so, with the help of the president of the company, I . .

Taguchi: Excuse me, but do you mind if I ask a few questions? We haven't much time, and. . . .

Kawanishi: Perhaps that would be best. Yoshi, I happened to run into Mr. Taguchi today, and he said he'd like to ask some questions about Saburō, back when we were doing kamishibai.

Taguchi: We're doing a special series on "Contemporary Heroes," you see.

Kawanishi: Yes, well. . . . You were living with Saburō, so I

thought that talking to you would be the fastest way to get information.

Yoshi: Hero? You mean Saburō?

Taguchi: Yes, er, I know that it's an imposition, but do you mind if I ask you a few questions, then?

Yoshi: I suppose it would be all right, but I'm afraid I won't really be able to tell you much.

Taguchi: Well then, Mr. Yoshimura, what kind of man is Kuroda Saburō?

Yoshi: He's . . . well . . . you know . . . Saburō is Saburō, that's all.

Kawanishi: "Saburō" isn't a good enough answer; that's why he's asking you.

Yoshi: I know, I know.

Taguchi: Then let me put it this way. Would you say he was a gentle or a violent person?

Yoshi: He's gentle.

Taguchi: Gentle.

Taguchi *makes a note.*

Yoshi: But then he had a violent side, too. . . . Actually he's a violent person.

So Taguchi *erases his note.*

Taguchi: Violent, is that it? I see, a gentle person with a hidden streak of violence lurking in his soul.

Yoshi: I guess that might be what I mean.

Taguchi: What was your motive for getting involved in kamishibai? For example, were you trying to bring new hope to the disillusioned children in the ruined streets of Tokyo immediately after the war?

Kawanishi: That's right, Yoshi was very popular with the kids. He was good at playing with them.

Taguchi: I'm sure.

He makes a note of this.

Yoshi: I wasn't particularly doing it for the children. Of course, as I went along it got easier to communicate with the children, and I felt more comfortable with them, but . . . but even if I had wanted to start a business, I had no capital, and I had no skills to get a job somewhere else, and my health was bad too, so there was nothing else for me to do. It was people like me, who couldn't find anything better to do, that did kamishibai. Those were days when you had your hands full looking out for yourself. You couldn't be concerned with others. You had to do what there was to be done in order to eat. . . . In that sense I guess things haven't changed much.

Kawanishi: Yoshi! I understand what you mean, but. . . . But look, now you're running a candy factory. And there's, you know, the children's dreams. You see what I mean? The method is different from kamishibai, but, well, maybe you're so involved in making each piece of candy that you can't see the whole picture.

Taguchi: I see it! I see it!

His pencil runs rapidly over a page in his notebook.

Yoshi: I don't see anything. I'm business manager of the company, and I don't know the first thing about making chocolate.

Taguchi: The next question I'd like to ask is . . . yes, you stopped performing kamishibai in 1959, in . . .

Yoshi: March.

Taguchi: Then it was two months after that, wasn't it? When Mr. Kuroda left kamishibai. Did you know?

Yoshi: Yes, Saburō quit and became a cartoonist. It was last summer, I think. I was over at the company president's place, drinking beer and talking about the days in Manchuria, and his son was sitting there, reading this comic book. I happened to take a look at it, and what do you know, there's Saburō's name written on it! I got all excited and grabbed the book away from the kid and began to read. And then, why, it was "The Other Legend of Crucified Mozaemon," the story he'd done with us, only the title had been changed to "Red Eyes." In the end Matsuzō avenges Tae. The pictures had changed a lot, too. As I read I began to cry, thinking about how hard Saburō must have worked to draw all that. . . . I really wondered why I wasn't with him, why I hadn't stayed with Saburō until he'd finished that story. I don't know why I'm so spineless. . . .

Taguchi *is taking notes.*

Kawanishi: But look, Taguchi, there's one thing that really has to be made clear: Saburō's quitting kamishibai and taking up cartoons was entirely a matter of his own problems in creation. In other words, he'd been trying, through the medium of kamishibai to find a way to express, not the result of a struggle, but its process. When he couldn't find what he was looking for in kamishibai, necessity forced him to go elsewhere.

Yoshi: I think you're absolutely right about there being . . . what did you say? . . . a certain necessity in Saburō's leaving kamishibai. But what do you think would've happened if no such necessity had existed? Do you think Saburō would still be drawing kamishibai today?

Kawanishi: Well, I . . . I don't think you can hypothesize a historical situation like that. Situations are concrete, and the question is how you make your stand in each situation, that's all.

Taguchi: Interesting, very interesting.

A popular song can be heard from another house.

Taguchi: Finally, I'd like to know what you thought when you read "Red Eyes." Especially your thoughts as the model for Matsuzō.

Yoshi: Mr. Taguchi, I want you to get one thing straight. There is no connection between me and Matsuzō.

Taguchi: Why, yes, I'm sure, but. . . .

Kawanishi: Yoshi, there's nothing to get excited about. All Mr. Taguchi wants to know is. . . .

Yoshi: Pop, it's been four years, and I still haven't the faintest idea what the kamishibai art movement was all about. No matter how you look at it, I was in kamishibai to eat. . . . Kamishibai was important to me, and that's a fact. . . . But we're living in the age of television. Kamishibai's like a toy compared to television. You can work out all kinds of fancy explanations about how each medium of expression has its own limitations, I suppose, but that won't change the fact that I quit kamishibai, not in five years and not in ten. Look, I used to say, "Once a man's begun something he's got to see it through. Otherwise he isn't worth bunk." Well, there are lots of things that human beings want to do but can't, and when you can't, when you really wanted to but couldn't, it feels

like there are needles pricking your heart. The longer a man lives, the more needle pricks he has to endure. But whoever put human beings together certainly knew his business because the longer you live the less sensitive you become. You forget what you've done, what you've said. You forget everything. Heh, heh, you forget everything.

There is a moment's silence.

Yoshi: Mr. Taguchi, you're not going to find out anything about Saburō by coming to me. It's just a waste of train fare. But look, Saburō, you see, the real Saburō, is the Saburō in his work. That's what I meant when I said "Saburō is Saburō."

At this point **Yoshi's Wife** *enters.*

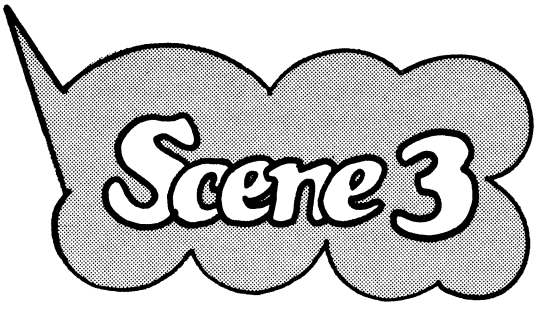
Yoshi's Wife: I'm sorry to interrupt your conversation, but dinner's ready.

Taguchi: Oh, you really didn't have to. . . . I, er, I have a train to catch, so. . . .

Yoshi's Wife: Oh dear, but you can have a little something, can't you? Mr. Kawanishi, you can stay, I'm sure.

Yoshi: What about the mushrooms? Have you fixed them?

Yoshi's Wife: I had a terrible time. There just weren't any that looked tasty, so instead I made some bean curd in broth.



Just then the strains of a popular song are heard, and the scene shifts to Tokyo.

Sanae: I wonder if Yoshi's happy like that?

Ono: It looks like it.

Sanae: What were you out talking about all afternoon?

She speaks to **Saburō.**

Saburō: You won't believe it. They want me to do a cartoon for television.

Sanae: Really? That's fantastic!

Ono: So television's finally come begging!

Saburō *is silent.*

Sanae: "Saved by matchlocks!"

Ono: When do you begin?

Saburō: I don't.

Ono: Did they make a lot of demands on you?

Saburō: No, they said they'd leave everything up to me. . . . I don't know, it just scares me, that's all.

Ono: There's nothing to be afraid of. There's nothing so special about television.

Saburō: No, there is something special about it. I thought I'd been drawing things that couldn't be used on television. Then

why?

Ono: Anybody can tell if something's good. The problem is content, right?

Saburō: I wonder. . . . Flipping through the weekly gossip magazines, nobody seems shocked anymore to find gorey battle photographs next to a color spread on the Imperial family. Nobody seems surprised that the war, where people were slaughtered day after day, has come to be accepted as a matter of course. What's made things this way? Why do people give their tacit approval to a soldier who kills a student but berate a student who bumps into a police officer? And why do people always try to sound like everybody else? Look, as long as people keep calling me cruel and dirty, I can maintain some confidence in my work. But when people start smiling their stupid smiles at me, I begin to get scared. That's just not supposed to happen.

Ono: I understand. But look, you've got to consider the fact that if you don't do it somebody else will, and there'll be something a lot worse broadcast in that time slot. We don't have any choice but to work in television.

Sanae: That's right. We have to produce the best possible work. That's what's important now, isn't it?

Saburō: The reason I draw. . . .

He does not attempt to finish the sentence.

Ono: It's because you're so damned stubborn. You'll be drawing cartoons for a while, but someday you'll understand.

Sanae: Oh, I forgot. Mr. Kageyama said that they're going to publish a series of comic books aimed at regular bookstores, and he wants you to think about it. I told him you're pretty busy at the moment, but he wanted to know if you'd mind if they republished "Red Eyes."

Saburō: "Red Eyes?" I haven't looked at it for a while. Do you know where it is?

And he gets to his feet.

Sanae: I think it's to the left on the second shelf from the top.

Saburō *exits. There is silence.*

Sanae: Makoto.

Ono: Yes?

Sanae: Do you think it's too late for me to go back?

Ono: Go back?

Sanae: To puppets.

Ono: I don't see any reason why you couldn't come back, but. . . .

Sanae: I guess I've been away too long.

Ono: Not at all, if you came back to us, we'd. . . .

Sanae: I think I'd like to work with you.

Ono: But. . . .

Saburō *returns with the original drawings and spreads them out on the larger of the two desks.*

Sanae: Saburō, isn't there someone else who can take care of the work I'm doing now?

Saburō *speaks as he goes through the drawings.*

Saburō: I suppose so. Why? Is it too much for you?

Sanae: I'd like to go back to Makoto's group and work with the puppets.

Saburō: Oh. . . .

He stops going through the drawings.

Sanae: Are you against the idea?

Saburō: No, I'm not against it.

Sanae: Then it's all right? I don't want you to just say it's all right. I want you to say, "Do it! Go to it, it's the best way!"

Saburō: For the moment I'm against the idea. No, what I mean is I don't want you to go.

And for the first time he looks at Sanae.

Sanae: Listen, Saburō, a long time ago I came to you from Makoto's group. I thought you needed me. If I hadn't gone out into the streets to perform, you wouldn't have been able to draw kamishibai. But anybody could handle the work I'm doing now.

Saburō: Stop it, Sanae.

Sanae: Why?

Saburō: I'm very grateful to you.

Sanae: How can you say it that way?

Saburō: If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't be the man I am today. But did you come to me because I needed you? I doubt it. I think you needed to come to me. You're the one who made the choice. . . . I understand your wanting to justify everything: women are especially prone to believing that everything was what they hoped it would be.

Ono: But all Sanae's trying to do is make things go smoothly.

Saburō: That's not possible.

Sanae: But. . . .

Saburō: Look, all I'm trying to say is that it's not easy to protect what's important to you. If you go back to Makoto's troupe, things are going to be difficult for me. I probably won't be able to work anymore. And, well, it would hurt me. So don't ask me if it's all right. You're badly mistaken if you think you're going to get a friendly, concerned answer. I don't want you to go, and that's what I'm telling you. I mean, to me you're . . . But that's not the point. The point is that even if I tore the place apart out of spite, even if I died stark raving mad, you'd have to protect what's important to you. I'm not trying to threaten you. All I'm saying is that even if that's the way I reacted, you should do what you think is right. This world is not made up of a handful of evil men who impose misery and suffering on those who try to live their lives in peace and grace. This world is one where good people stand in hostile opposition to one another. What I'm trying to do is make that just a little clearer.

Ono: But what Sanae wants now . . .

Saburō: Let's not talk about it anymore. There's nothing more to say. All I have to tell Sanae is that I want her to be with me, nothing else. It's just that everything's related. I try to bring an anger or a vision into focus, but you two always obscure the issue with your attempts at justification.

Ono: Saburō, there's a good reason why you can't draw anything modern. Today the world's not made up of bad lords and oppressed farmers. When we go out, we don't meet workers dressed in greasy coveralls, wrenches in their hands. Today

there are young people out there riding their brand new motorcycles to the seashore, and they're almost sure to have a television in their cozy little homes. Do you understand what I mean? The situation's different from five years ago. Today, unless some pervert's on the loose, there are no murders. In this peace and tranquillity, our only responsibility is to advance the struggle.

Saburō: Sure, an old friend drops by for a chat, and it's a real event. But is that really the case? Has our rage of five years ago really been so neatly resolved? Sanae, I think you're right to feel that we've lost something. But was it something essential? You'll go back with Makoto. Perhaps a stage-struck young girl will rush breathlessly into your dressing room. Perhaps someday your truck will get stuck in the mud and everyone will get out and push, and you'll have a sense of fulfillment in friendship and solidarity. But you must never believe in that fulfillment, because that petty friendship and solidarity has stolen something from you. And having believed in it, you. . . .

Ono: Saburō, how could you have changed so much?

Saburō: Changed?

Ono: Yes. Four years ago you were at least making progress, but now you're isolated and confused. When you were drawing *Red Eyes* you were wholesome and good. And a fine piece of work is a fine piece of work no matter how you look at it. Now you have to draw a second and a third *Red Eyes*. What's needed now is something to bring us together. At a time like this, when weak people stand in disunity, we've got to find a single focus.

Saburō: No, *Red Eyes* is still incomplete. It just can't end that way.

The slides from the end of ACT II are flashed rapidly across one wall of the stage. The scenes of the attacking peasants are accompanied by a high-spirited march.

Sanae: Are you going to draw some more?

Saburō: I have to.

But the stage is a sea of flames, and out of the distance a voice is heard.

----Nobunao! Nobunao! . . . Where are you! Where are you!

And the **Priest** *enters with a sickle in his hand.*

Priest: Nobunao! Where are you!

He looks around him and takes two or three steps.

Priest: Now I've got you! You'll pay for Tae's death!

And the **Priest** *brings his sickle down on his victim.*

Ono: Individual murder? Not much meaning in that, is there?

Sanae: I wonder if that's the way it would go?

She suddenly jumps up.

Sanae: To avenge my father! To avenge Mosuke! To avenge Kayo! To avenge the farmers of Numata! What if lots of farmers did it? But it would only be individual revenge to each of them. It doesn't work, does it? . . . Maybe it's killing that's the problem.

Priest: Open your eyes! Open your eyes and look at me! Don't you recognize me? There, you see, you've aged, too, but you haven't

changed. I'm Matsuzō, Matsuzō of Tsukiyono. Listen to me! Don't you understand? To you I'm not Matsuzō? Just another farmer? . . . He's dead!

Sanae: Is that the way it ends?

Ono: That's no good, Saburō, it's got no point of view, no perspective.

Sanae: That's right.

Saburō: What are the losers supposed to do? They fight to the limits of their strength and lose. But they still have to go on living. What is left for them? Revenge isn't something you do because it has meaning; it's something you do because there is nothing else.

Suddenly there are farmers' voices.

----Your holiness! We won!

----And not just in Numata. We've had word that there are farmers surrounding the castle in Ueda, too!

----Farmers near and far have seen the rebels of Numata and are rising up themselves!

----Follow the people of Numata! They're saying that if they unite, they're stronger than their lords!

The **Priest** *raises his sickle.*

Sanae: Your holiness? . . . You come too, your holiness. . . . Everyone expects you to fight along side us.

With his sickle raised, the **Priest** *moves toward Heita, who abruptly stops speaking.*

Sanae: Your holiness? . . . Why? . . . You're mad!

Priest: I know what I'm doing.

Sanae: But. . . .

Saburō: Matsuzō knows what he's doing.

Sanae: His holiness has lost his mind! His holiness has lost his mind! . . . Right? There's no other explanation. . . . If that's the way you want it.

Heita takes a short sword and thrusts at the **Priest**, *almost seeming to run him through.*

Priest: No you don't.

And the **Priest** *returns Heita's onslaught, killing Heita instantly.*

Sanae: Oh, no! You mean Heita dies?

Priest: You should have learned by this time: the weak perish!

Sanae: It was his wish from the first to return to dust beneath the castle.

Ono: Stupid, if Heita dies what's going to happen? Who will take responsibility for the next generation?

Sanae: Yes, . . . but the Priest is so much stronger than I am. . .

Priest: Correct. Only the victors believe that justice triumphs. It is the strong who triumph. I did not fight because my cause was just. And I did not win because I was just. I won because I am strong.

Saburō: Won? Why did Matsuzō win?

Priest: I won because I am strong. My art, my Red Eyes Religion, won out over the matchlocks. Art won!

Saburō: Art? But art, like matchlocks. . . . To win? To win, and then what?

The farmers are shouting.

----Your holiness!

----At last we've. . . .

The number of farmers increases.

----Our rebellion's succeeded!

Priest: Not yet! It's not over yet!

----Why? Why?

----Numata Castle has fallen.

----In the town, farmers are dividing up the rice that was stolen from us.

----We'll have white rice for the first time in months!

----Our rebellion's succeeded! Our suffering is over!

Priest: No, it is not over.

Saburō: It cannot be over.

Priest: It's only beginning!

One of the farmers steps forward.

----Maybe he's right. Maybe his holiness is right. Of course, our battle is over, but there's so much left to do! We've got to unite and work together!

----We have to clear and till new land.

Together: Yes!

----We have to irrigate our fields!

Together: Yes!

----We have to plant sweet potatoes in case the other crops fail!

Together: Yes!

Priest: No! You still do not understand! That's not what's beginning. Nothing's ended yet! Nothing's ended yet at all! You haven't defeated your enemies!

----Your holiness!

----Why?

Priest: Don't you understand? I fed you a handful of lies, and you believed in the Lord Red Eyes. Why can't you recognize the truth!

Together: We don't understand!

Priest: Here is what happens to those who don't understand!

And the **Priest** *raises his sickle.*

Together: He's mad! His holiness is mad!

Priest: You fools! Why do you speak in chorus! I won by Red Eyes! Why do I despise him!

Together: His holiness has lost his mind!

Saburō: Mad, Matsuzō! Go mad!

Priest: Ha, ha, ha, ha, Tae! You must be happy now! Ha, ha, ha, ha. Tae, I've avenged you! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Aaaa! Red Eyes! In the sky! Red Eyes! Ha, ha, ha, ha!!!

The villagers look on in stunned amazement.
Blackout.
A popular song can be heard.

The Eternal Recanter

Saeki Ryuko

In attempting to depict the inner history of an individual, it will be impossible to grasp the reality of his personal history so long as it is viewed from without. Meticulously detailing the process of the man's struggle through life is of very little help. Such a depiction resembles the note left by a suicide. It informs us of his suffering but does not make it any less impossible to understand. Unless the individual's personality is endowed with a bivalent structure that reflects in his own personal struggles the larger struggles of historical reality, there will be nothing to learn from him but that he lived his life and/or died his death. We are in fact surrounded by stories of individual hardship. Should a work of drama that attempts to describe the internal workings of an individual personality fail to transcend the level of our daily experience, fail, that is, to exceed the two-dimensional, naïve plane of empiricism, we will leave the theatre with nothing more than the matter-of-fact impression that the hero of the work really must have suffered. Unfortunately, such an experience is of unparalleled banality. As impoverished of personal significance as it is devoid of objective meaning, it is as cheap and available to us as the dissensions between the characters who have just been developed on stage. We forget their various and sundry sadnesses the moment we leave the theatre, because there is little structural difference between their suffering and our own. When this is the case, we can only discard the world of the theatre and expression for the world of reality and action.

I.

Red Eyes by Saitō Ren is a work of such linguistic and structural antiquity that I find it hard to believe it was written by one of my contemporaries. The work is presented as the postwar history of its central figure, a character derived in part at least from the cartoonist Shirato Sampei, and, although it has grown close and oppressive with the playwright's own commentary, it is actually a stereotypical history of individual character formation supported by a self-serving view of history and an ambiguous *inner ethic* with which one's actions can be justified to taste. It is, in short, nothing more than an old-fashioned history of ego formation. The same thing could be said of the other characters as well. In the final analysis, the time of their lives is time internal to themselves, time where the actual process of history has no place.

In the January 22, 1968, edition of *The Nihon Dokusho Shimbun*, Kan Takayuki made the following comments on the play.

> This play by the newly arrived playwright Saitō Ren, while disorganized and prolix in parts, clearly depicts the distorting power of history and the figure of an artist who lives under its burden. The work particularly emphasizes the hero of the play-within-a-play, who goes mad just when the revolution has been fulfilled, and the ambivalence of the artist who leads him into madness.

Unfortunately, I did not see it this way. It simply does not mean anything to have objectified "the distorting power of history" as Saitō has done in his play. Lines like "a man has to protect what's

important to him" illustrate nothing but structureless anxiety. The characters may well have justifiable reasons for being anxious. It is up to each individual whether or not his anxiety is justified. But it is probably too optimistic to conclude that the anxiety expressed by the characters in *Red Eyes* or the way they cling tenaciously to their own inner worlds indicates that they are "shouldering the weight of history." But does *Red Eyes* ever really come to terms with history?

The characters in the play live a certain history sincerely, even beautifully. The central figure Saburō makes himself out to be irascible, but deep down inside he is really quite sincere.

II.

Overall, the actions of the characters in the play lack historicity, i.e., history as a concrete presence. The spread of television, the marriage of the Crown Prince, the Haneda Disturbance of 1967, and other events and trends from postwar history are forced onto the stage via popular songs and other artifacts of postwar history either as nostalgic retrospects or as the objects of righteous anger. The actions of the characters, however, are neither affected nor changed. Saburō continues the play-within-a-play out of vengeance. He is always anxious about "something." He insists that one must protect one's inner "something." It is thus that this play unfolds without ever having made it clear what it is talking about. The play revolves, by default it would seem, around the amorphous feelings of vengeance and spite of the characters, who obstinately concern themselves with their shapeless somethings, and around the playwright's pathetic and no less amorphous sense of identification with them. It is not that it is impossible to conceive of actions supported by vengeance and spite. But the question is whether such amorphous sentiments possess an unchanging nucleus, whether, that is, they can be relied upon to provide a standard by which to judge our actions, whether they possess a hard, unyielding texture. No matter how similar they may appear, today's sentiments differ from those of ten years ago. It is specifically because they change that sentiments are *a*morphous. And it is specifically because sentiments are amorphous that sentimental human beings cannot avoid changing and being saved by their own mutation. In terms of sentiment, men are eternal converts, accepting one faith only to recant in favor of another.

The "something" in *Red Eyes* is, in the final analysis, a single human being's inner self, his inner history. It is unavailable to others. But perhaps that is not true. At least the author does not think so, for he has set out to force others to recognize and accept this incomprehensible "something" in all its pristine glory. The dualistic approach of this play shares much with the settlement house philosophy of life: it is the perfected inner self that breaks through the seemingly insuperable barriers of the outer situation. History flows by and the play's characters are hurt. It's author is hurt. But so what? Is there a person alive who has remained unscathed by the slings and arrows of time? The more the play's characters are hurt, the thicker grows the skin over their inner selves, and those inner selves take yet another step toward perfection. Enough already. There have been enough settlement house dramas and kolkhoz plays, theatre where words function only as structureless, utilitarian tools.

The play's characters are not the only ones bound together by the thread of sentiment, however.

The same thread of sentiment is responsible for feelings of tribal solidarity with them. Expanding on the emotional life of any person will undoubtedly produce quite a number of dramas. But the appeal of such dramas is limited to members of the same tribe. For those of us outside the tribe, however, there can only be frustrated disappointment in the apparent sincerity of the playwright and his characters. The sentiments that envelope and support this play probably constitute a certain common understanding shared by its author and producers, but anxiety comprehensible only within the bounds of such an in-group and the disproportionate degree of catharsis apparently achieved by the in-group in confronting that anxiety can provide the basis for neither a new theatre nor a theatre movement. Things only begin to happen when the object of such an assumed common understanding is brought into question.

III.

A skeletal self-consciousness lacking the truth that comes with action is the quality that pervades the characters' behavior. All that can be expressed by devulging one's feelings toward an amorphous "something," however, is antiquated and meaningless words, a self that is totally irresponsible and thus totally self-justifying, in short, the tired old theme of man's search for meaning in life. In this respect, the real Shirato Sampei, the model for this play, and his real life unquestionably exceed the acts of the characters in this play.

The dramatic method of the play, to describe an entire situation or history by describing a single individual's struggle to protect his inner "something," is the fundamental pattern of postwar Japanese situation theatre, which begins with Kinoshita Junji. Compared to Kinoshita's *Fūrō* [Wind and Waves, 1947] or Fukuda Yoshiyuki's *Nagai Bohyō no Retsu* [The Long Row of Gravestones, 1957], *Red Eyes* describes a far less concrete history. It nonetheless falls into the same category by virtue of its structure. The greatest fault of this dramatic method is that it almost totally dichotomizes external history and the individual inner world. The individual, driven by some idiosyncratic logic, runs haphazardly into the wall of history or is trapped in some circumstantial cul-de-sac, whereupon he explodes in one great flash of self-destructive light. As members of the audience, the only thing that supports this mad dash and explosion, gives us a glimpse of the situation behind it all, and suggests that all is as it should be, is our emotional acceptance of the "something" unfolding on stage. With incredible ease the characters shoulder history, suffer under its burden, and give way to despair. The fact that most such plays end either in a second departure, in the ultimate depths of despair, or in total madness, i.e., in clean, uncomplicated tragedy, is due, not to the weight of the history or circumstances depicted on the stage, but to the fact that, because the role forced on the *individual* was too great, he was unable from the first to bear it. Thus he rids himself of the unbearable contradictions of his role through emotional catharsis. Only his cosmic rage remains for eternity, and history is reduced to the very Hegelian simplicity we have hoped to escape.

*

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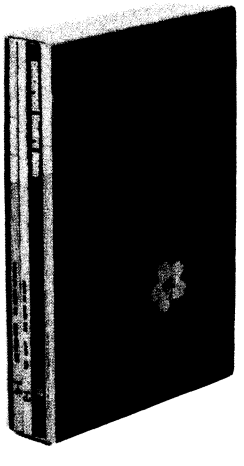

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